No. 679. For Week Ending January 4th, 1902. [One Penny.

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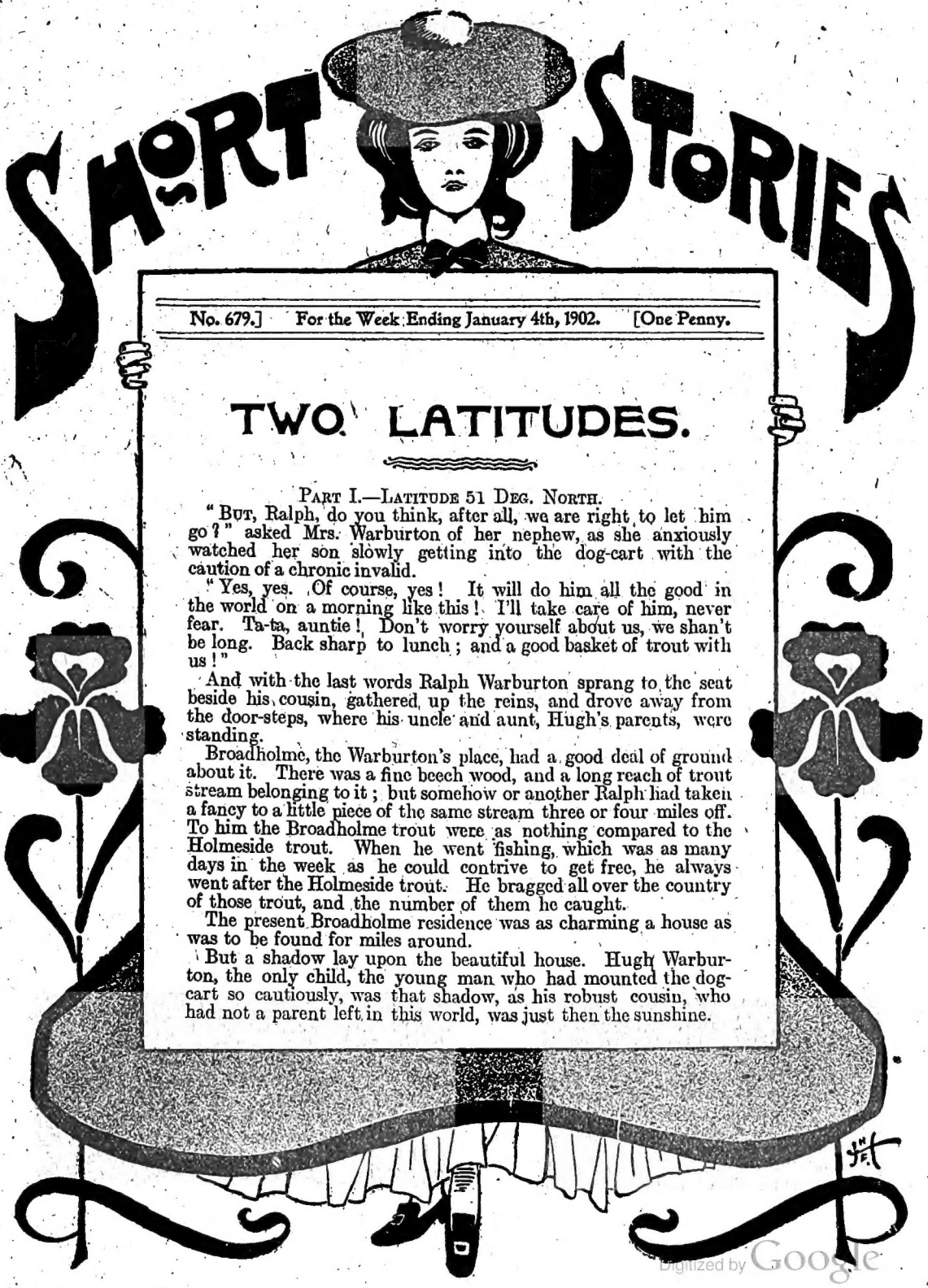

No. 679.] For the Week Ending January 4th, 1902. [One Penny.

TWO LATITUDES.

PART I.—LATITUDE 51 DEG. NORTH.

"BUT, Ralph, do you think, after all, we are right to let him go?" asked Mrs. Warburton of her nephew, as she anxiously watched her son slowly getting into the dog-cart with the caution of a chronic invalid.

"Yes, yes. Of course, yes! It will do him all the good in the world on a morning like this! I'll take care of him, never fear. Ta-ta, auntie! Don't worry yourself about us, we shan't be long. Back sharp to lunch; and a good basket of trout with us!"

And with the last words Ralph Warburton sprang to the seat beside his cousin, gathered up the reins, and drove away from the door-steps, where his uncle and aunt, Hugh's parents, were standing.

Broadholme, the Warburton's place, had a good deal of ground about it. There was a fine beech wood, and a long reach of trout stream belonging to it; but somehow or another Ralph had taken a fancy to a little piece of the same stream three or four miles off. To him the Broadholme trout were as nothing compared to the Holmeside trout. When he went fishing, which was as many days in the week as he could contrive to get free, he always went after the Holmeside trout. He bragged all over the country of those trout, and the number of them he caught.

The present Broadholme residence was as charming a house as was to be found for miles around.

But a shadow lay upon the beautiful house. Hugh Warburton, the only child, the young man who had mounted the dog-cart so cautiously, was that shadow, as his robust cousin, who had not a parent left in this world, was just then the sunshine.

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Mr. and Mrs. Warburton stood watching the trap as it rapidly passed through the long drive.

"Have we done right?" asked the mother. "Isn't there a touch of east still in the wind? Is his coat thick enough?"

"O, my dear, Ralph will take care of him. Do him good! Glad Ralph managed to get him out. Fine fellow, Ralph!" said the father, with a heartiness of speech he did not feel; for inwardly he was frightfully jealous of his nephew's health and strength. It seemed to him a wrong both to himself and his son. Why should Ralph be so well when Hugh—

The parents each knew what the other was feeling. With a heavy sigh they turned away, the one to her morning room, the other to his stables. It was sad how each had avoided looking at the other.

As for the two young men, they were soon bowling along the high road in fine style.

The roads were dry and dusty; damp, cold, and winter seemed to have fled away for ever. The light air was half-intoxicating. They left the trap in the village. Murray, the man, put it up at the Greyhound. They turned down by a little rustic bridge, and walked by the side of the Lutterbourn until

"O, here we are?" cried Ralph. "Here's the very sunniest nook on the whole stream. Blest if that bit of wall isn't quite hot!"

"Too much sun for fishing. You'll never get a bite in such water as that," said Hugh. "However, I'll have a cast and try, just for the fun of the thing."

"The water here always suits me, that's the beauty of it," said Ralph laughing. "Now, have you got all you want? All right then. *I fish over that wall.*"

"What, among the apple blossom?" asked Hugh, looking up into his cousin's face, with his two luminous eyes, which always seemed unnaturally large, suddenly spreading as it were all over his face.

Ralph laughed, the colour rose up to the roots of his hair; he turned away whistling—he had a very true and musical whistle—a well-known air from "Patience": "Prithee, pretty maiden," etc., and he walked straight up to the wall, leant both his arms on the top of it, and looked about among the lichen-covered stems of the old apple trees in the orchard.

Now if Ralph Warburton meant the words "pretty maiden" to describe that object of his dreams who was at that very moment advancing towards him under a shower of fluttering pink blossoms a light breeze had displaced, no term could well be less appropriate.

Helen Beresford, of Holmeside, was not merely "pretty maiden," with flaxen hair and speed-well eyes, and a waist like a wasp's, she was "a daughter of the gods, divinely tall," and, in fact, she was exactly the same height as Ralph, and he was not short for a man.

She came to meet him with free, glad steps, and a something of almost childlike tenderness in her blushing face and tremulous mouth.

They shook hands over the orchard wall—that is to say, they did not *shake* hands, because she put out her hand, which was soft and round, but distinctly powerful, and he held it in both of his, while he said a good many things that need not be put down.

"Why, that is your cousin?" said she presently.

"Yes. It was so fine—he wanted so much to come out, poor fellow! So I brought him down here to fish—else, you know, I could hardly have come myself, and until to-morrow would have been such an awful time."

"Poor fellow! He looks happy, though!" said Helen, with her voice full of pity. She had the tenderest heart in all the world.

"Come out and speak to him," said Ralph; and by way of making her come out, he put both his hands on the low wall and vaulted over into the orchard.

"It's absurd to go out just yet, though," said he, and taking her arm as if he had a right both to it and her, they walked up and down among the apple trees for a few minutes in silence.

"Helen," he said presently, very seriously, "do we understand each other?"

"I suppose so," she answered softly, and instantly began to tremble all over.

"Then it's only the question of the confounded tin," he went on.

"I suppose so," she repeated still more softly and nervously.

"Then we'd better tell granny? Yes, and Hugh?" he suggested.

"I suppose we'd better; or, perhaps, we'd better wait until—until we can see our way clearer."

"This uncertainty is horrible," began Ralph.

"It is very trying," she murmured; "still, we must be brave."

"You're always brave, bless you!"

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are; I wish I'd half your pluck."

"That wouldn't be much."

"But you can't think how repulsive it is to me—to—to—"

"To be poor? Oh, there are worse things than that!"

"No, no, it isn't that; it's—it's the horrible knowledge that when that poor fellow goes—and he must go—I shall be my uncle's heir, and—well, then, of course, everything will be different. You can't think how dreadful it is to me to see him about. I often feel I can't stand it—I must go. If it hadn't been for you I should have gone. But he's so fond of me; he can't bear any one else about him. And I'm fond of him too. I never had a brother, so I can't say what it feels like to have one, but I couldn't be fonder of a brother; and—but there, it's horrible to me—it really is! And I've been such an unlucky beggar too!"

"Well, the luck will turn now; it can't go on for ever, you know."

"I'm an ungrateful brute for saying so, as it's won me you, Helen."

Here fortunately there was another shower of apple blossom, which shall be allowed to screen them for a few seconds.

"At any rate, up to my time of knowing you, I was always such an unlucky beggar," resumed Ralph. "My uncle's been good to me, as uncles go—very different from a father and that sort of thing. When I was plucked for the Civil Service, I thought I'd like to learn tea."

"Learn tea?" asked Helen.

"Yes, I was going out to Assam; then I came down here for a few days to recruit—tea was such a frightful grind, and I found poor Hugh awfully bad, and he made no end of a fuss when I wanted to leave. My aunt and uncle were half out of their minds about him. 'What's all the tea in the world compared to poor Hugh's comfort? If he wants you to stay, you must stay,' they said; so I hung on here. But of course it's the very thing I ought not to have done; though I don't know how it is, it's only just lately that anything has seemed to matter much. I'm afraid you'll find me—"

"No, I shan't," said Helen. "Ah, there's granny out on the lawn!"

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"Shall we?" asked Ralph, slightly raising his eyebrows.

"Perhaps we'd better," she faltered.

So they both went off and told granny, who, strange to say, was not in the least surprised to hear it.

"Well, to punish you for your wickedness, I shall keep you prisoner in my castle of Holmeside until after lunch," said granny.

"Oh, but I've promised to be back sharp to lunch, and the others will be frantic if we're late. Good Heavens!" looking at his watch, "we shall hardly do it as it is Come, Helen, come. Good-bye, Mrs. Beresford."

And the engaged couple hurried off. Just as they turned out of the orchard gate they saw Hugh coming towards them.

Ralph left Helen's side for a moment and said:

"Hugh, old fellow, I'm the happiest man in the world! We've settled it all, haven't we, Helen? And she says she approves of you as a cousin."

"Very good of her! I am sure I return the compliment a thousand-fold," said Hugh; but he could not get through the sentence without a cough.

She came to meet him with free, glad steps.

"Isn't it time to be going?" he asked presently with another cough.

"Do come in and have something," said Helen.

"Mrs. Beresford has asked me to stay," said Ralph, beginning to waver between love and duty. "But I don't see how we can manage it!" regretfully.

"Why not?" said Hugh. "Here's Murray. No, Ralph, you shan't come; I won't have you. I am quite capable of taking care of myself. This lovely day has done me no end of good. Good-bye, good-bye."

And he turned away and walked off along the banks almost as briskly as if nothing were the matter with him.

They looked after him for a moment, then went towards the house arm in arm, talking happily.

Two hours of happiness; two hours of a present, so perfect, so exquisitely blissful, that it seemed to have neither past nor future. They stand alone, do those two hours, in the memory of a man and woman—unique, impossible to repeat; the beginning of their affianced life, the end,

Holmeside, old Mrs. Beresford's cottage, was a very small and modest residence, but it made up in charm, so far as Ralph Warburton was concerned, what it lost in size: to him it was altogether perfect. The tiny drawing-room was half bow-window, all twined about with dark-stemmed jasmine and the tender young leaves of a climbing rose.

He and she sat in that bow-window very close together, and talked in whispers after lunch when granny had gone to take her nap. But they did not say very much; their great happiness had made them quieter.

In a long pause between their broken talk, the sound of a horse's hoofs in rapid motion reached them; it came nearer very swiftly; it arrested Ralph's ear. He turned sharply to the window; in another instant "Golightly," the fastest horse in the Broadholme stables, was in sight. Murray was on him; they were tearing along the road at the very top of the thoroughbred's speed.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Ralph, and dashed out of the room and through the shrubbery.

Murray pulled up short in front of the gate.

"What's amiss?" shouted Ralph, the man's face striking him with cold terror.

"Bad news, sir; bad news!" exclaimed Murray, shaking his head.

"Be quick! What's wrong?" cried Ralph.

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"Mr. Hugh's just about killed himself!" said Murray. "He would drive that great pulling brute; all I could say wouldn't stop him. You shouldn't have left, Mr. Ralph; he wouldn't mind me. But he's done for himself—broken a blood vessel the minute he put foot in the house. Best get back, sir, quick as you can, if you want to see him again. We've been tearing about for doctors. I've just been to the post-office with a telegram to a London physician; but I knew where you was, sir, so I thought I'd better give you a hint. The squire's taking on awful!"

"Here, I'll ride back 'Golightly.' You get something from the Greyhound," said Ralph; then hurrying, pale as death into the house.

"I must go! Good-bye, good-bye!" he cried wildly, stammered out the fatal news, kissed Helen once with white lips, mounted 'Golightly,' and galloped back to Broadholme as fast as the horse would take him.

A couple of out-door men were waiting about the Warburtons' house; neither spoke a word as they took his horse. He sprang up the steps and entered the quaint hall. His uncle was pacing up and down in a state of frenzy. He walked straight up to Ralph and shook his clenched fist in his face, crying, in a voice he was obliged to subdue:

"You've murdered my son! You've killed my boy! How dare you show your face in this room? I tell you you've killed my boy!"

"Where is he?" asked Ralph wildly.

"What's that to you?" demanded the Squire. "I tell you, you've murdered my son! You might have waited!" he added, with a bitter taunt, "you'd not have had long to wait! But you've overdone it, sir! You shall smart for it!"

"Where is he?" repeated Ralph, trying to push past his uncle, and too overwrought for courtesy. "Where is he?"

"What's that to you? Leave the house this moment?" stormed the maddened father. "This roof can't cover both of us!"

He tried to bar the way, but Ralph was too much for him.

"He wants me!" he cried under his breath, springing up the stairs.

"He wants no one now! Come back I say; don't go one step further!"

"He wants me, and he shall have me!" returned Ralph.

"Come back you, you, sir! come back!" his uncle called after him, smothering his voice as best he could, but gesticulating with fury.

Ralph hurried on.

"Tell my aunt I'm here," he whispered to a girl who was waiting outside Hugh's door.

She nodded slowly, lifting the corner of her apron to her eyes as she did so. In a moment or two Mrs. Warburton came to him.

"O, Ralph! Ralph!" she cried, trying to stifle both her voice and her sobs; "why did you leave him? O, you've killed him! you've killed my darling!"

"Does he want me?" asked Ralph, almost choking with emotion.

"O," sobbed the mother, "his poor eyes have been asking for you all the time, and you never came—you never came!"

"May I go into him now?" said Ralph huskily.

"Leave the house, sir! Am I the master of my own house or not?" exclaimed Mr. Warburton, who had followed his nephew up stairs, seizing Ralph's arm with a powerful grip. "You dare to go into my boy's room! You've murdered him, sir—murdered him!"

"O, don't! don't," cried the wife, trying to separate the two men. "Our darling needs him, dear; he must come!"

"Am I master here, I want to know?" demanded the husband.

"No, no; you're not master to-day!" said the wife, in wild agony. "Death's master now! Dear, you must let him come with me, indeed you must! Come, Ralph; he wants you."

They went softly into the darkened room. There was a still, marble face on the pillow—a marble hand on the quilt. Ralph took the chair by the bedside, and without a word placed his own strong hand over that cold frail one his cousin had no power to lift.

Hugh opened his eyes, let them rest on Ralph, and smiled faintly, as if he had at last found what he was seeking and was content; then he closed them again, and appeared to fall asleep.

Ralph sat there quietly hour after hour, as the day faded into night, and until the first flush of red touched the sky.

But before the dawning it was all over. Then Ralph rose from his watching and stole out of the house. For him, wandering homeless, all had come to an end; except the consciousness that for ever the gnawing sense of guilt would never leave him.

As if by instinct he groped his way down to Holmeside—along by the broad highway—down through the wet banks of the Lutterbourn. At last he was with her again; he hardly knew how it happened, she was in his arms, or he in hers.

"We must part—we must part for ever! I am not fit for you now! His face—I shall always see his face! I'm an outcast and a vagabond on the earth!"

But she clung to him; she would not let him go.

"Then so am I! It was the fault of both of us."

"You cannot love me now, Helen."

"Now, and for ever—for ever and a day!"

"I must hide myself at the world's end! You couldn't follow me so far?"

"To the world's end! aye, and to a mile beyond it!"

Part II.—Latitude 8 Deg. North.

A waveless sea, bluer than the bluest sapphire, on which float myriads of great white jelly-fish, faintly lapping a narrow belt of golden sand; dense vegetation growing almost to the water's edge; gigantic cotton-trees, stately palms, slender cocoa-nuts with wide spreading tufts of feathery foliage and clusters of green fruit, and broad-leaved bananas. Embedded in this ocean of verdure, innumerable round mud huts with pointed roofs of bamboo thatching, and tall square houses with corrugated iron gables, on which the tropical sun beats pitilessly; a West African town clustering around the feet of dark-wooded mountains under an exquisite opaline sky—lightness, brightness, heat, and the sun everywhere—and everywhere colour, pure and vivid as a tropical flower.

A verandah of one of those white houses—a wide verandah shaded from the blinding glare by hanging mats of woven grass; a young Englishman pacing restlessly up and down, now and then stopping to raise the matting and gaze impatiently seaward. The silence when he stops, and his footfall does not break it, is deathlike. He listens—listens—paces up and down

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in a growing fever of unrest, again touches the mat. Hark! At last the boom of the signal-gun! He drags back the blind, eagerly looks at the too well-known flag-staff; the flag is being run up—the mail is sighted. Then comes the worst of the waiting.

"Good Heavens! how she's crawling!" he exclaims, as he fixedly watches the steamer in the offing.

He has waited so long—so long patiently accepted a separation that was inevitable; now, with the steamer in sight, time seems insufferable. But it goes by—it goes by slowly, but it goes!

He leaves the house and the friends that are looking after him in the town—for his home is far away in the wilds and hurries down to a little wharf, where he finds a huge Kroo-man with a blue tattoo-mark about half-an-inch wide running from the top of his black forehead to the tip of his nose, lolling half-asleep in a large boat.

"Bannah Will!" he shouts, "make you get crew one time! Mail done come."

In a few minutes after great shouting of—

"Hi! you Frying Pan! Hi! you Slap Jack! Hi! you Lahai Hi! You Bottle of Beer! You lazy creatures!" Bannah Will manages to collect his "boys," the Englishman jumps into the boat, the black giant pushes off, and away they pull from the shore, where they watch the steamer until they can see where she will anchor; for as there is no proper landing-place it is always uncertain where she may stop. But they are nearing the vessel every minute. After all—will *she* be there? What if she is not? No, no, that would be too dreadful to happen. She must be there!

But to return to our narrative, and the sober past tense. Two years and a half before this, a fellow countryman of Bannah Will, with his boys, had the honour of bringing Ralph Warburton himself on shore, when he first arrived on the West Coast. He had had a bad time of it, one way and another, ever since that fatal day when he had lingered among the English apple trees with Helen Beresford. He had failed in a trust; he deserved to be punished—he did not deny it; he was as severe with himself as any man could be, but his punishment had been a hard one; still, it had done him good—it had made a man of him.

He had dropped talking of such trifling tasks as he had had to perform in England as "an awful grind." He knew, he learnt very soon after his arrival on the coast, that up to that time he had hardly done a good day's work in his life. After a couple of years incessant toil, broken only by African fevers, he had returned to England to recruit his health.

He had not ventured so much as to look at Broadholme; but he had married Helen, stayed at Holmeside six weeks and left her there with granny.

It had been a dreadful parting, worse even than the first one; but he had been firm.

"I can't let you be killed, Helen! Even for me you mustn't kill yourself!" And he had gone without her.

It was an awful wrench; but there was an epidemic among the Europeans; the death-rate after his return to the coast was fearful; he was thankful she was safe at home.

The epidemic spared him, however; it took the men above him; he had learnt palm oil and other African produce well; he could cope with the wily native; and so he found himself the manager of Yolaba Factory on the Bockeroo river, and began to cherish a vague hope he might one day be able to see his wife again.

One evening, just after he had taken the oversight of Yolaba, he was sitting on the verandah in the bright moonlight alone, watching a great snake slowly gliding across the inclosure in front of his dwelling.

He was the only Englishman within many miles. He was tired, ill, depressed, craving for some one to speak to, when in came one of his men.

"Book done come, sir!"

"Book" proved to be a long letter from Helen; it had a black border. The sight made him tremble—his nerves were always in a frightful state out there—but it was in her hand. It covered many pages of thin paper, but the gist of it was this—

"My Dearest,—I am coming. You cannot stop me now. I shall have started before this reaches you. Poor granny's little annuity died with her; but the trifle she was able to save will just pay for my outfit and passage. I leave by the *Gonda* on the 18th November."

It was the *Gonda* towards which Bannah Will and his crew pulled Ralph Warburton across the sapphire sea, that washed the shore of the African town clustered around the base of the dark mountains; that town was a hundred and fifty miles from Ralph's new home.

Well, Bannah Will pulled about and watched the steamer; they came nearer and nearer; Ralph suddenly felt his heart all but jumping out of his body. There she was on the deck—there was his Helen!

"Hi! de missis done come!" shouted Bannah Will gleefully, as he saw Warburton waving his hat with all his might.

"Yes!" cried Warburton wildly, "de missis done come! de missis done come for true!"

O, but the bobbing up and down in that boat! The seeing each other, the waving, the signalling, the not being able to stop!

But at last—ah, well.

Yet, somehow there was an element of matter-of-factness about it that was incongruous, almost laughable. Luggage and that sort of thing would jostle up against the other sort of thing, you know; and there was so much to do, so much to see, such a lot of people to say "good-bye" to, so many to say "how do you do?" to; such a strange new country, such a kind, open-hearted hospitality within the square white house that rose among the verdure of the town, such sympathy—for out there, who does not know the anguish of parting, the bliss of meeting?—such, in fact, it was all a bewilderment of delight to Helen, in spite of the overpowering heat and the glare everywhere.

"But we're not at home yet, darling, you know," said Ralph.

"Home," said Helen. "How strange it seems to have a home that is not in England!"

"Well," said he, with a shrug of the shoulders, "of course it isn't really home—that is, it hasn't been yet; but it's going to be different now de missis done come!"

"Holmeside never seemed like home to me after you were gone," said Helen. "So I came to the conclusion that where you were must be home. Do you feel—I mean, I suppose you are glad I've come?"

"Glad! If you knew the torture of loneliness I've endured, you'd wonder I was here to meet you—that's all."

"Poor old man," said Helen; and she gave him a look which, not being able to stand, he interrupted in the proper way, there being no one about just then.

They had to do a hundred and fifty miles in an open boat before they could call themselves at home, so after two or three days "in town," Mr. and Mrs. Warburton said good-bye to even such vestiges of European

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life as were to be found there, and set out for the lonely factory on the far-distant Bockeroo River.

After three days in the boat, and two nights spent—one at the mission station on the coast, and the other on a small island, where they were the only Europeans—they left the open sea, and pulled a few miles up the wide mouth of the Bockeroo River, under a brilliant moonlight, until presently the monotonous dip of the oars ceased to break the death-like silence before a narrow wharf, behind which was distinctly visible a long white building with a veranda running the entire length of it.

How still! how utterly lonely it all was! Not a creature to be seen, not a sound heard, no light; no trace of any human being! Surely it must be more than a mile beyond the world's end!

"How's this!" cried Ralph angrily. "No one about! Where's the watchman?"

"Rope-yarn!" he shouted. "Rope-yarn!" he repeated several times at the top of his voice; and a minute or two afterwards, a light moved slowly down to the water's edge.

"Here, Bannah Will, make you carry the missis!" continued Ralph.

"Hi, you Bottle of Beer, make you come help carry de missis!" Bannah Will shouted in his turn; and together they managed to lift Helen through the shallow water, and then returned to fetch her husband.

"Is that our home, Ralph?" asked Helen, as soon as he was within speaking distance.

"No darling; that's the store. Here, Rope-yarn, make you show the house one time!"

Rope-yarn, holding his lantern close to the ground, for fear of treading on a snake, went before them, up a rough path, across a bit of country road, and entered, by rough wooden gates, a wide inclosed space, within which was another long white building. Through the yard, up a flight of brick steps, went Rope-yarn and the young married couple. On the verandah, Ralph dismissed the man.

"Now, my love," he said, and together they entered a great bare room. He turned and kissed her. "Our new home, Helen. Welcome to Yolaba!"

"At last!" she said, with a sigh of content, clinging to him for one instant before she looked around.

"At last!" he echoed. "And not much to see now you've got here!" he went on presently, altering his tone.

There was the great bare room—eight windows, through which the brilliant moonlight was pouring; four doors, two cane chairs, a well-worn English dining-table, a sofa, and two packing-cases from Whiteley's.

"You're not over-furnished, my dear!" said Helen. "But never mind; there's *you!*"

"And you!"

"But this will never do!"

"Won't it?"

"No; there are the cases to unpack. You've never seen me yet as a woman of business, you know."

"You don't mean to say you're going to do that to-night?"

"I am, though!"

Those cases were unpacked that night.

At half past five next morning they were again in the long bare room, and Ralph was saying:

"Now, Helen, now come and look at your new home! Come on to the verandah."

She followed him, and then stood speechless for a while, taking in the utter loveliness of the scene.

This is what she saw: a broad river; far off in the distance the sea, its breakers splashing like silver. Near at hand, the path, by which she had come last night, she now saw bordered on each side with a hedge covered with pink blossoms, over which countless humming birds, more brilliant than jewels, were hovering, their tiny bodies quivering and sparkling in the sun as they sucked the honey through their long straight beaks. A bread-nut tree, with large shiny dark green leaves, all but looked in at the young English couple on the verandah, and palms were everywhere; and everywhere the busy little rice birds, gorgeous in black and yellow velvet, were stripping the green off the broad palm leaves, chatter, chatter, chattering incessantly. A solitary cocoa-nut tree watched over a cemented duck-pond in one corner of the inclosed space in front of the house; in another a group of glossy black-skinned girls, with gleaming white teeth, were drawing water at a thatched-roofed well, laughing and talking as if life were the greatest joke in the world.

"How do you like it now, Helen?" asked Ralph, who had been gazing, not at the scenery, but at his wife's rapt face.

"It can't be real!" she murmured dreamily.

"It is good to look at, isn't it?" said Ralph.

"Surely it can't be so unhealthy as you say! It's too lovely—it's too lovely even to be real!"

"Then you're not sorry you've come?" he asked.

She put out her hand; he took it.

"I'd like to kiss you for that," he said fondly. "But those girls can see us. We always have to be setting examples here. Well, now, there's housekeeping beginning. Here comes your fishmonger."

A boy, attired in a red cotton handkerchief, came up the path, carrying a bunch of brilliant fish, just caught, and threaded on a piece of grass. A minute after the native cook came in.

"Boy done bring fish? Say eight copper, sar!"

"Here, Helen, give him fourpence; I'm going to turn all this sort of thing over to you," said Ralph, and then, looking again towards the yard, "Ah," he exclaims, "here comes a particular pet of mine!"

A little tot of a girl, in a loose blue and white muslin garment, and coral earrings in her baby ears, the prettiest little black creature imaginable, was coming towards the house, poising a great melon on her woolly head.

"The sweet little thing!" cried Helen. "Call her up. Do let me hear you speak to her."

Ralph called her.

"Good morning, sar. Good morning, marm. Me mammy say six coppers, sar," piped the most musical voice in the world.

"What a darling! Threepence to pay, Ralph."

Further conversation was prevented by the resonant tones of the factory gong. Ralph drank off the cup of tea that had been waiting for him.

"Well, dear, we must part until eleven o'clock; so good-bye for a time.

Simple details these; but it was Helen's first morning on the Bockeroo River. They were impressed on her heart for ever.

At eleven Ralph came in, vigorously mopping his face.

"By Jove! By Jove!" he exclaimed, as he caught sight of his wife arrayed in a loose princess robe of cool white batiste, the wide sleeves showing her smooth, firm arms. "O, I say! By Jove!"

It was his method of expressing astonishment and admiration.

Certainly if Helen Beresford in her serge among the apple blossoms of Holmeside had looked a grand creature,

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Helen Warburton at Yolaba in her white robe was grander.

"And what a breakfast table! A whole set of china, I'll declare! Now I begin to understand the expression, 'A woman of faculty.'"

Helen smiled: it is so nice to be praised by a husband—

A little tot of a girl was coming towards the house, poising a great melon on her woolly head.

a fact that is sometimes forgotten. She smiled, took his hot hand, and led him to an object covered by a cloth.

"Guess!" she said mysteriously.

"Couldn't! My brains won't run to so much excitement," said he, sinking into a chair.

"I must help you, then. What is this?"

"Holly, by Jove! You don't mean to say—but not don't tell me till after breakfast, and I'm strong enough to bear it. You don't mean to tell me—I'll declare, next Wednesday's Christmas Day! So it is! I know, I know! It's our Christmas pudding!"

* * * * *

"Here's a pretty go!" ejaculated Ralph, as he came in to breakfast one morning, scowling furiously, and mopping his face more vigorously than ever. "Here's Jackson, my only Englishman, down with fever! Heaven knows what I'm to do among that pack of thieving rascals. I can't keep my eye on them all; I have to be all over the place. There'll be fine plundering;" and Ralph began to nibble at his lips and moustache, as his manner was when overwrought and nervous.

"Who is looking after Jackson?" asked Helen, as she handed her husband the tea he so greatly needed.

"Black nurse," said Ralph. "First-rate; never leaves the patient an instant; but what I'm to do without him Heaven knows, I don't."

"What is it you want done, Ralph? I mean, what is it that's most particular?"

"Oh, I want somebody with an eye," cried Ralph moodily. It was hotter than ever that morning

"An eye! I have two—at your service, if they can be of any use to you," said Helen, with that admirable coolness of hers.

"O, I can't take you in there," groaned Ralph.

"Should I be of the slightest use?" asked Helen.

"Why, of course! What a question!"

"Very well; then I shall come."

"Well, you are a brick! But I don't like it."

"Just the thing I shall enjoy. Bless you, Ralph, you don't know me even yet as a woman of business! I feel I've heaps of unexpended energy left still."

"Energy! How can any one who isn't a salamander have a scrap of energy in this furnace?" groaned Ralph, letting his arms fall limply on each side of his Madeira chair.

"Still, the place must be driven," put in Helen.

"Con-con-confound it, yes!"

Half-an-hour later Helen was on her way to the factory; "factory" being the local word for "store."

A number of native canoes were drawn up near the wharf. A negro was sleeping by the water's edge, with the rope that held his boat tied to his toe. In the various sheds palm-oil was being measured, and other native produce being collected and weighed.

Helen went up a flight of steps into an enormous room, very well built. Through the room ran a long counter, at the back of which were rows of shelves displaying Madras handkerchiefs, bright prints, blue baftas, crockery, tobacco, tinned provisions, tools, beads, and indeed, to quote Ralph, "everything from a needle to an anchor." As the store had not been long reopened, it was just then

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very popular with the natives. It was crowded all day long.

"What a din! Shall I ever be able to hear myself speak?" said Helen to herself, as she paused bewildered.

The noise was frightful; the room filled with people from all sorts of out-of-the-way places on the neighbouring rivers, all chattering, all wanting to be served at once. The heat was overpowering; and the odour—paugh! A hundred glittering pairs of eyes were turned on the tall white woman in her sweeping robes.

Mutterings ran through the crowd.

"Hi, daddy, de missis done come! Hi, mammy, de missis done come one time! De missis fine woman for true!"

That clear organising brain of hers soon made order out of chaos. In a very short time Helen found that she had three things to do—to keep an eye that nothing was stolen, to write out "good notes" or orders for the native traders who sold palm-oil or palm-nuts downstairs, and bought blue baftas or Madras handkerchiefs upstairs, and to "look after the pieces" generally.

She did it well. She liked it. It was singularly congenial to her; and, above all, it was invaluable to Ralph, who seemed compensated for all his troubles whenever he snatched a hasty glance at her neat brown head and white-robed figure.

The Englishman, Jackson, got well; but still Helen kept her post at the desk, and still her watchful eye held the wiliest native in awe.

So Ralph and Helen worked together until one afternoon, when, there happening to be a comparative lull in business, Helen left the desk and took a chair in the doorway, between her husband's private office and the store. She had another chair in front of her, over which was thrown a gay-coloured scarf, such as they sold to the natives for body-scarves, and Helen, who always must have her hands busy, was ravelling out the ends to make the fringe, while she kept an eye to things in general, when she felt a slight pain across the brows. It was very slight, but it was peculiar.

"Fever!" she said; and she laid down her work at once.

At once—and for ever. She left the half-fringed scarf hanging over the back of the chair, and crossed the floor to her husband, who was at the desk in the middle of the room.

"There's such a curious pain across here," she said, putting her hand just above her eyes.

Ralph looked up at her; his face changed, his heart sank.

"I daren't leave. Jackson must stay in the palm oil shed. Go up to the house at once. Get some hot tea. Lie down. Pile on all your thickest things," he said hurriedly.

She went away alone, through the burning glare of the sunshine; but she was shivering with icy coldness when she reached the house. Burning heat succeeded the cold. She was down with fever.

It was a terrible attack. She grew worse and worse. She suffered horrors unimaginable by those who have never gone through them. Ralph was half mad with dread; he knew only too well how critical her state was; but the inexorable factory had to be driven all the same. It was most distressing to leave her; but business would not stop because Ralph Warburton's wife was hovering between life and death. They neither of them ever knew how they managed to live through the next few days.

The fever subsided; but the weakness that followed was almost more appalling. She could do nothing but cry by the hour together from sheer prostration. Then to make things worse, if possible, a series of tornadoes ushered in all the miseries of the rainy season.

One evening when Ralph came in, Helen was lying on the sofa weeping piteously, and too weak even to turn to welcome him. He tried to comfort her, to rouse her, to get her to take something; but all in vain. He was in despair; she seemed sinking before his eyes. He could not stand it; an hour afterwards he was down with fever himself. That attack—it was a bad one while it lasted, probably saved his wife's life. In her terror for him she shook off her own illness, until he partially recovered.

One evening about five o'clock, Ralph, who had just managed to drag himself about the factory all day, came in quite done up, more dead than alive, and sat down in the veranda by Helen's side.

It was a fine evening. Helen had been sitting there for some time, watching the line of silver breakers far off at the river's mouth, the big tears streaming slowly down her face as she looked at them. They seemed, that distant open sea seemed, to her the only way back to civilisation, to England, to home. She dried up her tears as well as she could when she saw her husband coming; but her eyes would keep brimming over; she was so weak, so home-sick, and so was he.

"O, those two hours at Holmeside—what have they done for us?" Ralph groaned. "Shall we scrape all together, and go back and starve?"

Ralph now had the most melancholy way of putting things. Helen broke into a hopeless fit of bitter weeping. Before she could sob out an answer the black cook appeared.

"We no got noting for dinner, marm."

"What, not even a fowl?" asked Ralph.

"He done finish, sar."

There was a dead silence after this announcement. Out of doors all was still; even Helen had ceased sobbing for an instant.

Suddenly Ralph bent forward, as if listening eagerly, holding up his hand to keep the black man from uttering another word. He listened—far off, from miles and miles away down the river, came stealing, only to be distinguished by the practised ear, the peculiar chant of a canoe crew.

"It's the boat with the letters!" he exclaimed.

It stopped presently at the little landing-stage; the head man of the crew brought up a japanned tin box. It held letters and papers.

A letter from England; another letter with a deep black border. It was from Ralph's aunt, it was kind, but heart-broken. His uncle was dead. He died forgiving him. Broadholme was Ralph's; and so was the money the letter contained.

A fortnight later Bannah Will and his crew pulled Ralph and his wife back to the town that clusters round the base of the wooded mountains, but not, this time, over a smooth and waveless sea. As they stepped on to the deck of the English steamer Helen cried fervently:

"Oh, let me kiss the boards!"

But the bright sun came out again; the lovely West Coast looked lovelier than ever.

"After all," said Helen, as she and her husband stood side by side gazing on the receding shore, "after all, it is very, very beautiful."

"Especially when seen from the deck of a homeward-bound steamer," said Ralph, as if concluding his wife's sentence.

Lizzie Alldridge.

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An Adventure of Felix Merryweather.

Amateur Investigator of Crime.

Felix Merryweather was a would-be investigator of crime. He had never been professionally engaged but he lived in continual hopes. When a retired corn-chandler has arrived at the age of sixty it is not usual for him to embark on the "lot that is not a happy one." Nor is it to be supposed he can possibly make anything else but a rod for his own back by indulging in such a strange hobby.

Felix, however, thought otherwise. He had been led away from the normal aspirations and contentment of his three score years, by a certain celebrated magazine, and the marvellous achievements of a famous detective whose name had become a household word. One of the earliest effects of this fascination for anything and everything concerning the doings of the aforesaid character of fiction, was the removal of all that was Merryweather's to Baker Street. This was a bold move—in more senses than one; for he had amongst his possessions a wife, whose scruples were not so easily overcome.

"You must be simply mad!" she said, soon after the move; "shutting yourself up in this horrible neighbourhood; what with the yells of costermongers and newsboys all day, and the whistling for cabs and policemen all night—why, it's enough to drive a sane person silly!"

"True—true—my dear!" Felix had replied glibly; "but think of the splendid study of character; think how great it is to deduce the false from the fair. Why, in time I shall be able to accurately tell from the voices of itinerant callers the very quality of their goods!"

At which Mrs. Merryweather sniffed disdainfully.

"Now, my dear Martha," he continued impressively, "only this morning I complained to you about the milk Smith left. I distinctly heard an unusual ring in the man's yodel. It was not a genuine cry of Milk-oh. My deductive faculties enabled me to see immediately that one of two things had occurred; the man had either doctored his milk and betrayed himself unintentionally or he had drunk some, and the added water with boracic acid spoke for themselves."

Martha had put up with several such instances of her husband's constructive abilities. Unfortunately for her, Baker Street yielded a good many, and proved a happy hunting-ground for Felix's hobby.

There was not a crime committed in the whole of the metropolis of which he was unaware.

He carefully preserved each newspaper cutting that dealt with the police-courts, and had every case at his fingers' ends.

He was very strong on motives, and could discourse by the hour on what prompted so and so to do so and so, when there was not even the shadow of possibility of his knowing.

With practice he became an adept in the study of foot-step sounds, and could readily detect in the silence of the night the difference between the "pit" of a homeward bound chorus-girl and the "pat" of Robert on his beat.

He was wont to hint that even dust-carts left infallible marks along the tracks traversed, which could be detected with some difficulty by anyone who cared to study the subject.

In spite of all, Felix, for several weeks after his sojourn in Baker Street, could get no case.

He had a dressing-gown made, most faithfully copied from the pattern of the one worn by his fictitional master. It absolutely bristled with suggestions and methods. One could easily conjure up, as Felix did, by steadfastly gazing at it the representation of a plan of Dartmoor, the Birdcage at Newgate, the corridors of New Scotland Yard, and a condemned cell.

He went so far as to procure a hypodermic syringe, but at the last moment felt too nervous to inject, so he decided to use the article as a "prop."

At last it dawned upon him that the only way to get a case was to advertise.

If the mountain would not come to Mahomet—Mahomet must go to the mountain.

Accordingly an advertisement appeared in all the leading daily papers one morning to the effect that if anyone wanted anything done Felix Merryweather was the man to do it.

The second morning after this advertisement came out Felix had just breakfasted, when a terrific ringing at the front door bell announced a visitor.

He rubbed his hands exultantly: "A case—a case, Martha, at last! Show them up here, whoever they are!" he shouted.

Then throwing himself into an easy chair, he placed his finger tips together in the most professional manner,

and awaited his visitor. Heavy footsteps soon resounded upon the staircase, and the door was suddenly flung open violently.

Evidently the visitor was in a temper, for instead of knocking he had literally kicked the door open.

Merryweather jumped up nervously, as a big man with a red face blundered into the room.

"Is your name Merryweather?" he shouted, with all the force triple expansion lungs could give.

"Yes," said Felix meekly, as he eyed the stick his visitor carried suspiciously.

"Very well, I want your advice—and you can hook it," said the burly one, turning to Mrs. Merryweather, who stood there anxiously.

That lady thereupon gave him an indignant glare, and swept from the room.

"Won't you sit down?" Merryweather said timidly when they were alone.

"No, I do my business standing—you're a detective?"

"Yes."

"You can find out anything about anyone, eh?"

"Yes."

"I want you to find out something for me, d'ye see?"

"I am sure I shall be very pleased."

"Someone is making a fool of me, and when I find out who it is I mean to break every bone in his body!"

This sentence came out with a roar, and to add more force to it the visitor brought his stick down heavily on the table, causing the cups and saucers to dance wildly.

"Pray calm yourself," said Merryweather, relieved to find he was not personally threatened.

"Er—a case of blackmail?"

"Black—umph! It's nothing but a red mail. Look at these, man," and he threw on the table a packet of letters.

Merryweather undid the fastenings, and drew the contents from the first envelope.

There was no letter, but merely a white card on which appeared a small red cross, with the somewhat enigmatical word "Remember," written underneath. The other eleven envelopes contained an exact facsimile.

With fears fast vanishing and increasing interest, Merryweather critically examined them. He noticed each envelope was addressed in the same handwriting to:

Mr. Bull,
Butcher,
St. Marylebone.

"You are Mr. Bull, of course?" he asked.

"I am."

"By the postmarks you have received these at the rate of one a week?"

"Every Saturday morning for twelve weeks; the last came this morning, and I won't be insulted any longer. Just you find out who the sender is. *I'll* do the rest, d'ye hear?"

"Let me see! Hum! All these have been sent by the same party?" said Merryweather, as he again carefully scrutinised the envelopes through a large magnifying-glass.

"Any fool can see that," said Mr. Bull testily.

"Now, I have a theory," commenced Merryweather, when another bang resounded on the table.

"I don't want any theory," thundered Mr. Bull. "I want the man, and by next Saturday too, or I'll brand you as an impostor!" And without another word the wrathful visitor burst out of the apartment.

For a moment Merryweather was speechless, but he quickly recovered himself, for the mystery of the Red Crosses fascinated him.

His irate wife entered the room the moment the boom of the front door proclaimed that Mr. Bull had left.

She found her spouse crawling along the carpeted floor with a tape measure in one hand and the magnifying glass in the other. Every now and then he paused to sneeze, for his nose was within an inch of the dusty carpet.

"What on earth are you doing?" she gasped.

Merryweather stopped, and sitting on his heels, said impressively:

"Now, Martha, you know my methods—or I should say *his* methods, I never neglect trifles no matter how small they are. My object is to obtain the size of my client's boots. There must be some impression on the carpet. Armed with a record like that there is no knowing when the knowledge might be of vital importance."

"Mind the next time those boots are near they do not leave an impression on you," Mrs. Merryweather said sententiously.

Her husband evidently did not hear what she said, for he continued his investigations in spite of her remonstrances.

He afterwards proceeded to go over the apologies for letters again. They certainly did not yield much data. In fact, with the exception of the handwriting and the postmark—none at all. The former was in a bold hand, such as anyone from a schoolboy to a warehouseman might use, the latter stated that the Euston Road was the office of origin.

They all bore the same impress.

"Well," said his wife after an unusually long pause. "What do they mean?"

"I think these crosses are sent with a sinister design. Our client's life is in danger, and there is no time to be lost in getting on the tracks of the miscreant."

"Felix Merryweather," impressively exclaimed Martha, "I've had enough of this tomfoolery. If a crime is intended, the police ought to take the matter in hand, what good is it for you to poke your nose into other people's business?"

"In matters of this kind, great delicacy is needed, my dear, the police would be powerless—you must leave me alone for awhile and I can then think out the mystery."

When he was alone Merryweather took a violin from a case and played all the most mournful airs he could think of, from Ben Bolt to Chopin's Marche Funebre.

He played for over two hours, and then smoked three pipes right off. When Martha opened the door to announce lunch she was immediately driven back by dense fumes of the vilest tobacco-smoke possible. For a whole week Merryweather spent his mornings in the same way.

In the afternoons and evenings he haunted the precincts of the Euston Road post-office and the Empire respectively.

Friday night came, and no clue had been discovered or headway made at all in spite of his exertions, and he was about to take his violin from its case once more when a ring was heard at the front door, and the next moment the servant handed him a note.

"From my client," he muttered as he tore the envelope open, and so it proved. It ran: "The inclosed has just arrived. Come round to me at once.—John Bull."

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Trembling with excitement Merryweather unfolded the letter inclosed. Undoubtedly it came from the same quarter as the cards, for there was the red cross largely displayed, and beneath were the following words:

"Do not fail to come to-night at 8.30 p.m. to 150, Tenby Street, W.—For the day of retribution is at hand."

There was no signature appended.

"Good gracious," gasped Merryweather, "the scoundrels—this is a decoy, they mean murder." And he wiped the perspiration from his brow. Then pulling out his watch he noted it was then 8 o'clock. There was not a moment to be lost.

"Where are you going now?" said his wife, coming in as he was struggling into his overcoat.

"Only to see Mr. Bull, my dear," he replied, with a nervous hesitation, for he was fixed so to speak, with her eye.

"Felix," she cried, suddenly bursting into tears, "you are going on some dangerous errand. Oh, why did you ever take up this horrid business?"

"I shan't be long dear," he murmured as he endeavoured to stop the saline torrent of wifely devotion with a red silk handkerchief.

"Let me come too," she urged between her sobs, "we have always stood together, let us die together."

But Merryweather was obdurate on this point, he had no intention whatever of sacrificing his own life, and he certainly would not risk hers. So amidst a storm of hysterical remonstrance, he strode from the domestic hearth on his important mission, leaving her to her sad reflections.

Mr. Bull was fully prepared for keeping the mysterious appointment, and when Merryweather arrived they set off immediately. The butcher's pugnacious demeanour had not abated in the very least, and as he strode along with his little old companion by his side, he continually uttered curses loud and deep, against the anonymous correspondent.

That he, John Bull, should be a butt for somebody's threats simply took his breath away. There was a bad time however coming for whoever it was, when the meeting should take place.

The moment they entered Tenby Street it was patent that something unusual was in progress. Merryweather's trained eye saw that at a glance, for the whole place was in an extraordinary turmoil.

Crowds of people blocked the pavements, seeming to be labouring under great excitement. The roadway was jammed with every variety of vehicle imaginable, from the coster's barrow to an up-to-date motor-car. Everybody was trying to get to the middle part of the street where the numbers of the houses ran highest.

Each moment fresh contingents poured into the street from both ends.

Every class and every profession were represented in that motley throng!

It was the strangest crowd ever brought together. Shoe-blacks, sweeps, printers' devils, lady type-writers, soldiers, gentlemen who had studied the nice conduct of their walking sticks, and hospital nurses, all surged along in the one direction. The few policemen were powerless, Mafeking night was but a twinkling star in the sky compared with this.

The butcher was flabbergasted and so was Merryweather.

What did it all mean?

Ribald cries and shouts of the mob rendered conversation impossible. All the windows of the houses were thrown wide open, and countless heads appeared.

The excitement was only increased when several fire-engines galloped up from all parts, while behind them a strong force of police ploughed their way through the noisy gathering.

Of the two the firemen made the best headway, for in less time than it takes to tell they set the hose at play, and a stream of water shot out, driving the masses away like chaff before the wind.

Ill-fate decreed that Merryweather and his companion were drawn into the full vortex. Between a lumbering coal cart and a brewer's dray they were impelled ever onward by the irresistible force from behind.

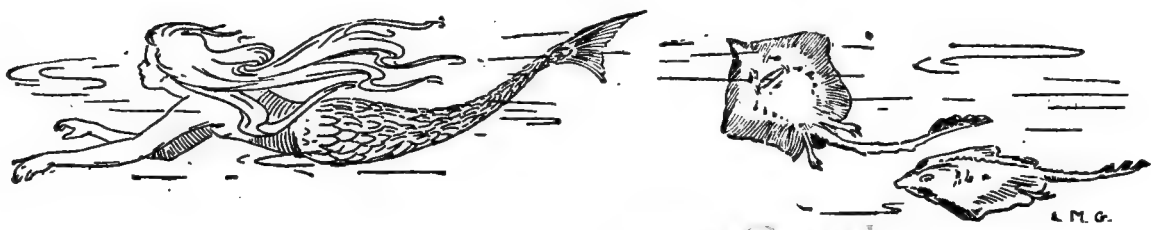
Hatless, coatless, drenched to the skin, and almost torn to pieces, they eventually reached their homes thoroughly exhausted.

Felix Merryweather that night registered a solemn vow this should be his first and last case in detective work.

The next morning's paper gave some explanation as to what really had occurred. Several hospital students to perpetrate a practical joke, had cribbed an idea from a celebrated humourist—which had had far-reaching results. Sending supposed orders to various firms requesting goods to be delivered at a certain time, and inserting interesting advertisements in all the papers, they had contrived this delightful little surprise. A false alarm to the nearest fire-station turned out the brigade, and the police followed. Other dodges, such as the red cross cards to men of Mr. Bull's pugnacious disposition, and others too numerous to mention, had merely heaped fuel on to the fire, and the *tout ensemble* produced their desired effect—*i.e.*—a riot.

Shortly after this painful episode Felix Merryweather, to Martha's great delight, removed all his goods and chattels from the house in Baker Street to a picturesque cottage in a quiet retiring country village, where the rest of his days he said should be devoted to the study of natural history!

Vivian Grey.



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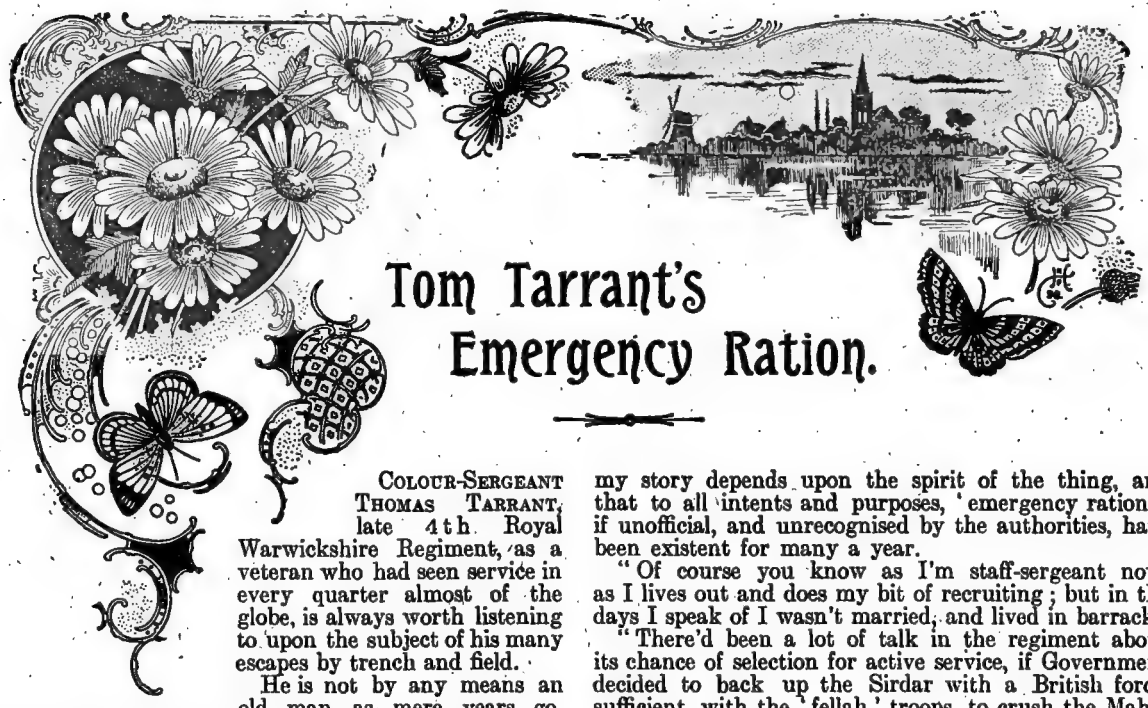

Tom Tarrant's Emergency Ration.

Colour-Sergeant Thomas Tarrant, late 4th Royal Warwickshire Regiment, as a veteran who had seen service in every quarter almost of the globe, is always worth listening to upon the subject of his many escapes by trench and field.

He is not by any means an old man, as mere years go, but a nasty wound or two, especially an ugly sword-cut that nearly severed his left arm at the shoulder, and which, even to-day, is a source of periodical pain and trouble to him, have contributed to visibly age him; although in carriage, and mentally, he is as upright and as clear-headed as ever.

An unusually modest man, it is with the utmost difficulty that he can be got to talk of his own personal doings. He will discourse by the hour together upon general military matters, or of a comrade's prowess or endurance; but he is strangely and persistently reticent where and whenever his own share comes in.

There had for some time been a story afloat with regard to an heroic action of his that I had long desired to hear from his own lips. It was only on one evening when I had literally pinned him into his particular arm-chair by the fire in the coffee-room, and manifested my deliberate intention to let him have no peace until he had duly satisfied my curiosity, that I was successful in extracting the narrative from him.

"Nothing—nothing—there was nothing in it," said he, between long puffs at his pipe.

"Well, sergeant!" I said, "let us be the judges as to that. Why unduly belittle yourself? We know that you are no braggart, and in a certain sense your modesty is highly creditable to you; but, well, in fact (and I speak, I am sure, for all present) in fact I—we want to hear the tale."

First fidgetting about a bit, and then carefully knocking his pipe out on the top bar of the grate, the old soldier drew himself smartly up, and began:

"There'll be a lot as'll say as what I'm going to tell you isn't true; because, as they say, there wasn't such a thing as an 'emergency ration' known in the Army at the time when Kitchener avenged Gordon.

"And they're right in a way, for the way they look at it there wasn't; but you'll see before I've done that my story depends upon the spirit of the thing, and that to all intents and purposes, 'emergency rations,' if unofficial, and unrecognised by the authorities, have been existent for many a year.

"Of course you know as I'm staff-sergeant now, as I lives out and does my bit of recruiting; but in the days I speak of I wasn't married, and lived in barracks.

"There'd been a lot of talk in the regiment about its chance of selection for active service, if Government decided to back up the Sirdar with a British force, sufficient, with the 'fellah' troops, to crush the Mahdi for good and all.

"There was but one opinion with regard to the justice of the cause. Some of us had fought under Gordon in China (I, for one) while at least two had served with him in the earlier days of his Governorship of the Soudan.

"I don't think as there was a man of the 'Warwickshire's,' save one, as didn't jump to go, when the 'route' came at last, with the order to increase to full strength, and for departure in six weeks for Alexandria.

"This *one* was Hartley Prawle, a gentleman ranker, who had joined some six months before.

"He was a big, red-haired chap, and like most people of that colour, fiery and bad-tempered generally.

"It was my duty to do the 'licking-into-shape' of the recruits of the regiment; and amongst those who in due course passed through my hands was Private Prawle.

"At the time I could not quite understand why he should have taken such a dislike to me, as he undoubtedly did.

"I treated him no worse than the other 'rookeys,' beyond having to be more strict with him, owing to his slowness in mastering the manual and other drills.

"Tarrant!" said the Colonel to me one day, soon after Prawle joined, "that fellow wants well looking after! Never mind his fine speech and manners—make him toe the mark the same as another man. I'll have no gilt-edged soldiers in my regiment!"

"But I fancy I knew how to manage my men better than the Colonel did; for until the advent of Private Prawle, I had always contrived, without failing in duty, to be on good terms with the 'new chums.'

"Prawle was so backward and slovenly in his drill and military duties generally, that I was forced to include him in the latest batch of recruits during the last week or two's training before leaving England.

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"He not only didn't like this, but was downright savage, and took every opportunity of 'kicking out' whenever he thought he could do so with impunity.

"I had been compelled to report him for gross disobedience and disorderliness; the result being three days' extra pack drill!

"I can see him now, marching doggedly up and down the parade, his face as red as his coat with passion, and his lips moving in half-suppressed cursing of me as his tormentor.

"His hour up, he halted at command, for me to 'dismiss' him,

"I had done this, and was turning away to go to my own quarters, when, without word of warning, he clubbed his rifle, and swinging it round in the air, dealt me a murderous blow on the back of the head, knocking me down, and rendering me unconscious.

"I was laid up for several days, so that it was nearly a fortnight before I attended in the orderly-room to bear witness against my assailant.

"I'm not, I can conscientiously say, a revengeful man; no one can ever say that I took advantage of his weakness, however much I may have personally suffered by it.

"I think that in this case I felt even more sorry for Prawle than angry with him.

"Bad-tempered, and all that, he certainly was; but, believing, as I do, that every man has some good points about him, if you can only know 'em, and, that by giving a dog a bad name, you practically condemn and execute him; I went before the Court Martial well-disposed than otherwise towards the prisoner.

"But it was of no use.

"Dogged, sullen, and with an evil-expression in his eyes, as I stepped forward to give my testimony, that boded ill for me should it ever be in his power in the future to do me a mischief, he persistently refused to plead either one way or the other.

"He had of course rendered himself liable to at least two years' imprisonment, and to be drummed out, and had circumstances not been as they were, he would, as sure as his name was what it was, have had to pay the penalty.

"'Sentence is deferred,' said the Colonel at the close of the proceedings. 'Halt! Sergeant!' he continued to me, as I was moving out of the room. 'Captain McIntyre tells me that, barring ill-temper, and a sort of laziness of disposition, Private Prawle has the making of a fine soldier in him. I suppose he knows, the man being in his company.

"'Now you have had the fellow in hand a good while—what's your opinion of him? You've suffered through him, I know, but I give you credit for bearing no malice. Come, now, Tarrant, is Prawle a subject for lenient treatment, seeing that we badly want all the fighting material we can get or keep!

"'Well, sir,' I said, saluting, 'if you'll pardon my freedom, it's like this. I should like to say that though he made me see stars, and many on 'em, and isn't, as you may say, particularly 'gone' on me, still I can't help feeling as Private Prawle is worth giving another chance to. He's got the fighting instinct—got it strong—and though he lets out sometimes wild and blind-like, depend upon it, sir, as he'll strike a good blow at this or at any other time, for Queen and country.

"'You are a generous enemy, seregant,' remarked the Colonel, 'and if we decide, owing to our need for men at this time, to look over his offence, he will have you to thank for it, for we should have been guided entirely by your report, and recommendation. Let him be brought up to-morrow morning before 10 o'clock parade.'

"The sentence passed on him was:

"'Confined to barracks until the day of embarkation.'

"Prawle escaped further punishment; but it was thought best to put him into another company, and so I saw but little of him, even when on board the transport, right up to our landing at Alexandria.

* * * * *

"It was the evening after Omdurman.

"Tired, bruised, hungry, thirsty, the troops were being withdrawn to their lines as quickly as might be.

"The smashing of the dervishes had been complete—absolutely complete—as all the world knows.

"The pursuit was over; the Khalifa's power was shattered to its very foundation; and the way was now open for General Kitchener right up to the Citadel of Khartoum.

"There are always stragglers on such occasions; men who, slightly wounded, perhaps have dropped by the way, and—have been overlooked; others who, of deliberate intention, have sneaked away, deserting their colours; while (as here) there were many who, just exhausted by the exertions of the day, sought some quiet corner, under a bush or a dwarf palm, in the hope of gaining if only a little rest.

"It was my fortune to be among the former of these.

"Early in the engagement I had been cut down by a ferocious dervish, mounted on a white horse, his scimitar sheering clean through the left shoulder to the bone.

"The loss of blood, together with the agony of the wound, made me feel sick and faint, so much so, that for a little while, at any rate, I cared not a jot whether I lived or died.

"Then I revived a bit, after managing to get a drink of water from my bottle. This was a job, as, somehow, the latter had got twisted under me, and the pain in my arm and shoulder made movement of any kind excruciating torture.

"It was curious that, in spite of my wound, I should, when my thirst was quenched, have developed an almost savage hunger.

"I had eaten nothing for over four-and-twenty hours, so it was not to be wondered at that I should feel a bit peckish.

"As I have said, there was no such thing as an official 'emergency ration' known to the Army in those days. But Tommy Atkins is resourceful, if he is anything at all and, when he can, looks well after 'number one.'

"Guessing that there would be a long fast, I (as no doubt did many others) provided myself before starting for the day's work, with a substantial mouthful or two. This I had concealed about me, trusting that when the need came I should find opportunity for discussing it.

"There was always the danger of being 'snagged' by native field thieves, or guerilla parties of the enemy. I didn't care a button who the disturbers of my peace might be, provided only that they did not appear on the scene before I had finished my snack.

"I had just contrived to wriggle the handkerchief containing it out of my breast, when I heard my name faintly spoken from the other side of the tree under which I had taken shelter.

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"Even before I dragged myself round, and faced the speaker, I knew who it was that I should find.

"It was Private Prawle.

"He lay in a heap, with his head resting sideways against the palm-stem.

"'Sergeant!' he says, with an odd smile in his eyes, and about the corners of his mouth, 'this is a good time for you to get your own back, isn't it?'

"I never felt so awfully mean in all my life as I did at that minute, with that there handkerchief of sly victuals in my fist, and this poor chap a-dying maybe, for the want of a bite and a sup!

"'Why, Prawle!' I says, 'What's up? Are you hurt?'

"'I don't know, sergeant, exactly,' says he. 'I'm not in any pain, and my head feels all right, though a bit giddy, but my legs! It's darned rum! but they havn't a bit of feeling in 'em! I might as well have wooden legs!'

"'Yes, that is rum!' I says, though I knew only too well that it were a dead bad sign his being in no pain, 'we must try and get you in first chance. I've got a bit of a scratch myself, but it'll be all O.K. when plaister and bandage come along!'

"'I say, sergeant,' he whispers then, 'I'm awful hungry' (so was I, Heaven knows; my stomach seemed like a concertina, with all the wind out). 'You haven't a toothful of anything to eat about you, have you?'

"Then he caught sight of my 'emergency ration,' and he just looked ever so wistful, first at *it*, and then at *me*, as though he could eat the both of us; and till I felt that uncomfortable and wicked as I could hardly bear myself.

"Right in front of us was a big sand-hill. On the right of it were our lines, while away to the left of it stretched a camel-trod, rutty track, leading into the desert, in the direction of Wady Halfa.

"I raised my head as soon as Prawle had asked me the question about the food, and said something as quickened every sense of hope and fear within me.

"From the right I could see approaching, at a hard gallop, a cavalry picket in search of unfortunates like ourselves, their lance heads and steel accoutrements glistening bravely in the flood of bright moonlight.

"I could also make out, riding hard up towards us along the track on the left, a crowd of wild, burnouse-clad figures.

"It was a race between life and death.

"Prawle saw them—both of them, as I did, and beseechingly begged of me a morsel, before, as was most probable, the earlier arrival of our enemies, made it impossible.

"What could I do? The man had once injured me—deeply, but Heaven knows! I had forgotten the offence, and had long since forgiven him.

"I should not miss the poor meal if the dervishes got it first, for I should assuredly then sup in Paradise!

"'Here, Prawle!' I says, 'eat this—every crumb of it! Make haste, man, or it will be too late!'

"Then I looked more intently and saw that the British were gaining, and that, given good luck, we might yet get the odd trick, and be saved—both of us.

"Then two cries came sounding almost together—the dervish 'Allah!' and the never-to-be-imitated shout from British throats. They ring in my ears now!

"But the effort to satisfy his over-mastering craving for food had been too much for poor Prawle.

"He tried to raise himself on his elbow to greet our comrades, who now were well in advance, but could not, and sank back fainting.

"Captain McIntyre, of our own regiment, the Warwickshires, who had accompanied the picket, was the first to dismount and speak to me.

"The dervishes, seeing that the race was lost—to them, turned sharp round, after discharging their matchlocks wildly, and at random, and galloped away in a cloud of dust towards the desert.

"'It's poor Prawle, sir,' says I to the captain. 'I don't know if I've done right, but he was so mortal hungry, he said, and—and—sir, I couldn't deny him the mouthful I had in my pocket!'

"'Right!' said the bluff old cavalry major, pushing his way up to Prawle, who was still unconscious, and lifting the poor chap's head on to his knee. 'Right! why of course you did right! It was just what he needed, man, something to give him strength. He'll mend—he'll mend! or—well, I'll eat my boots!'

"And, sure enough, mend he did! and when he fell, only a few months ago, at Modder River, I hear as it was while fighting like two men to save his major—Major McIntyre, during a Boer surprise.

"He had his faults, as who of us has not, but he was a fine soldier and a brave man.

"As for me, I have lived not to regret, even by ever so little, the transfer of my 'ration' on that night by the well of the Atbara at Omdurman.

"There, I hope you're satisfied, and, perhaps, you'll be good enough to send out for a new pipe."

He had used his old one to such purpose as a graphic illustrator of his story, that it was smashed to atoms.

RALPH ENDERBY.

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THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

START THIS NEW SERIAL TO-DAY.

SUMMARY.

ANDREA DE MANCINI, a nephew of Cardinal Mazarin, is found one day by the latter in the Palais Royal, Paris, in a state of intoxication. Gaston de Luynes, the narrator of this story, and fencing-master to de Mancini, is blamed by the Cardinal for allowing his nephew to get into such a condition, and is removed from his position of fencing-master.

Eugène de Canaples insults de Mancini and a duel is arranged, but the Cardinal hears of it and tells de Luynes that it must not take place. De Luynes realises that if he does not prevent it the Cardinal has power to do him great harm, and accordingly raises a quarrel with de Canaples which ends in a fight, de Canaples being severely wounded. The onlookers are enraged with de Luynes because he indiscreetly lets fall the fact that he raised this quarrel so as to prevent a duel between de Mancini and de Canaples, and he has to flee for his life. To escape his pursuers he springs on the step of a passing carriage, and the ladies inside let him shelter there for a time, but when he says that he has wounded de Canaples they order him to alight.

De Luynes then accompanies de Mancini to the home of Eugène de Canaples, whose sister, Yvonne, Cardinal Mazarin wishes de Mancini to marry. Yvonne and her sister, Genevieve, who were the ladies who befriended de Luynes, arrive at the inn where the two men are stopping, and de Mancini is much taken with Genevieve. The Chevalier de Canaples receives de Luynes and de Mancini very cordially at his chateau.

CHAPTER VII. *(continued).*

To please Andrea was, however, of chief importance in his plans, and to that motive I owe it that he pressed me to remain a guest at the château. I declined the honor with the best grace I could command, determined that whilst Andrea remained at Canaples I would lodge at the *Lys de France* in Blois, independent and free to come or go as my fancy bade me. His invitation that I should at least dine at Canaples I accepted, but with the condition that he should repeat his invitation after he had heard something that I wished to tell him. He assented, with a puzzled look, and when presently Andrea repaired to his apartments, and we were alone, I began:

"You have doubtless received news, Monsieur, of a certain affair in which your son had recently the misfortune to be dangerously wounded?"

We were standing by the great marble fireplace, and Canaples was resting one of his feet upon the huge brass audirons. He made a gesture of impatience as I spoke.

"My son, sir, is a fool! A good-for-nothing fool! Oh, I have heard of this affair, a vulgar tavern brawl, the fifth in which his name has been involved and besmirched. I had news this morning by a courier dispatched me by my friend St. Simon, who imagines that I am deeply concerned in that young profligate. I learn that he is out of danger, and that in a month or so he will be about again and ready to disgrace the name of Canaples afresh. But there, sir; I crave your pardon for the interruption."

I bowed, and when in answer to my questions he told me that he was in ignorance of the details of the affair I spoke of, I set about laying those details before him. Beginning with the original provocation in the Palais Royal, and ending with the fight in the horse-market, I related the whole story to him, but in an impersonal manner, and keeping my own name out of my narrative. When I had done, Canaples muttered an oath of the days of the fourth Henry.

"*Ventre St. Gris!* Does the dog carry his audacity so far as to dare come betwixt me and my wishes, and to strive against them? He sought to kill Mancini, eh? Would to Heaven he had died by the hand of this fellow who shielded the lad!"

"Monsieur!" I cried, aghast at so unnatural an expression.

"Pah!" he cried harshly. "He is my son in name alone; filial he never was."

"Nevertheless, Monsieur, he is still your son, your heir."

"My heir? And what, pray, does he inherit? A title—a barren, landless title! By his shameful conduct he alienated the affection of his uncle, and his uncle has disinherited him in favour of Yvonne. 'Tis she who will be mistress of this château, with its acres of land reaching from here to Blois, and three times as far on the other side. My brother, sir, was the rich Canaples, the owner of all this, and by his testament I am his heir during my lifetime, the estates going to Yvonne at my death. So that you see I have naught to leave; but if I had, not a farthing should go to my worthless son."

He spread his thin hands before the blaze, and for a moment there was silence. Then I proceeded to tell him of the cabal which had been formed against Mancini, and of the part played by St. Auban. At the mention of that name he started as if I had stung him.

"What?" he thundered. "Is that ruffian also in the affair? Heavens! His motives are not far to seek. He is a suitor—an unfavored suitor—for the hand of Yvonne, that seemingly still hopes. But you have not told me, Monsieur, the name of this man who has stood betwixt Andrea and his assassins."

"Can you not guess, Monsieur?" quoth I, looking him

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squarely in the face. "Did you not hear Andrea call me, even now, his protector?"

"You? And with what motive, pray?"

"At first, as I have told you, because the Cardinal gave me no choice in the matter touching your son. Since then my motive has lain in my friendship for the boy. He has been kind and affectionate to one who has known little kindness or affection in life. I seek to repay him by advancing his interests and happiness. That, Monsieur, is why I am here to-day to shield him from St. Auban and his fellows should they appear again, as I believe they will."

The old man stood up and eyed me for a moment as steadily as his vacillating glance would permit him; then he held out his hand.

"I trust, Monsieur," he said, "that you will do me the honor to dine with us, and that whilst you are at Blois we shall see you at Canaples as often as it may please you to cross its threshold."

I took his hand, but without enthusiasm, for I understood that his words sprang from no warmth of heart for me, but merely from the fact that he beheld in me a likely ally to his designs of raising his daughter to the rank of duchess.

Eugène de Canaples may have been a good-for-nothing knave; still, methought, his character scarce justified the callous indifference manifested by this selfish, weak-minded old man towards his own son.

There was a knock at the door, and a lackey, the same Guilbert whom I had seen at Choisy in Mademoiselle's company, appeared with the announcement that the Chevalier was served.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Foreshadow of Disaster.

In the spacious dining salon of the Château de Canaples I found the two daughters of my host awaiting us, those same two ladies of the coach in Place Vendôme and of the hostelry at Choisy—the dark and stately icicle, Yvonne, and the fair, playful doll, Geneviève.

I bowed my best bow as the Chevalier presented me, and from the corner of my eye, with inward malice, I watched them as I did so. Geneviève curtsied with a puzzled air and a sidelong glance at her sister. Yvonne accorded me the faintest, the coldest inclination of the head, whilst her cheeks assumed a colour that was unwonted.

"We have met before I think, Monsieur," she said disdainfully.

"True, Mademoiselle—once," I answered, thinking only of the coach.

"Twice, Monsieur," she corrected; whereupon I recalled how she had surprised me with my arm about the waist of the inn-keeper's daughter, and had Heaven given me shame, I might have blushed. But if sweet Yvonne thought to bring Gaston de Luynes to task for profiting by the good things which God's Providence sent his way, she was led by vanity into a prodigious error.

"Twice indeed, Mademoiselle. But the service which you rendered me upon the first occasion was so present to my mind just now that it eclipsed the memory of our second meeting. I have ever since desired, Mademoiselle, that an opportunity might be mine wherein to thank you for the preservation of my life. I do so now, and at your service do I lay that life which you preserved, and which is therefore as much yours as mine."

Strive as I might I could not rid my tone of an ironical inflection. I was goaded to it by her attitude, by the scornful turn of her lip, and the disdainful glance of her grey eyes—she had her father's eyes, saving that her gaze was as steadfast as his was furtive.

"What is this, quoth Canaples. "You owe your life to my daughter? Pray tell me of it."

"With all my heart?" I made haste to answer before Mademoiselle could speak. "A week ago I disagreed upon a question of great delicacy with a certain gentleman who shall be nameless. The obvious result attended our disagreement, and we fought 'neath the eyes of a vast company of spectators. Right was on my side, and the gentleman hurt himself upon my sword. Well, sir, the crowd snarled at me as though it were my fault that this had so befallen, and I flouted the crowd in answer. They were a hundred opposed to one, and so confident did this circumstance render them of their superiority, that for once those whelps displayed sufficient valour to attack me. I fled; and as a coach chanced to come that way, I clutched at the window and hung there. Within the coach there were two ladies, and one of them, taking compassion upon me, invited me to enter, and thus rescued me. That lady, sir," I ended with a bow, "was Mademoiselle, your daughter."

In his eyes I read it that he had guessed the name of my nameless gentleman.

The ladies were struck dumb by my apparent effrontery. Yvonne at last recovered sufficiently to ask if my presence at the château arose from my being attached to M. de Mancini. Now, *attached* is an unpleasant word. A courtier is attached to the king; a soldier, to the army; there is humiliation in neither of these. But to a private gentleman a man may be only attached as his secretary, his valet, or, possibly, as his bravo. Therein lay the sting of her carefully chosen word.

"I am M. de Mancini's friend," I answered with simple dignity.

For all reply she raised her eyebrows in token of surprise; Canaples looked askance. I bit my lip, and an awkward silence followed, which luckily was quickly ended by the appearance of Andrea.

The ladies received him graciously, and a faint blush might—to searching eyes—have been perceived upon Geneviève's cheek.

There came a delicate exchange of compliments, after which we got to table, and for my part I did ample justice to the viands.

I sat beside Geneviève, and opposite Andrea, who occupied the place of the honored guest, at the host's right hand, with Yvonne beside him. Me it concerned little where I sat, since the repast was all that I could look for; not so the others. Andrea scowled at me because I was nearer to Geneviève than he, and Yvonne frowned at me for other reasons. By Geneviève I was utterly disregarded, and my endeavours to converse were sorely unsuccessful.

I clearly saw that Yvonne but awaited an opportunity to unmask me, and denounce me to her father as the man who had sought his son's life.

This opportunity, however, came not until the moment of my departure from the Château that evening. I was crossing the hall with the Chevalier de Canaples, and we had stopped for a moment to admire a piece of old chain armour of the days of the Crusaders. Andrea and Geneviève had preceded us, and passed out through the open doorway, whilst Yvonne lingered upon the threshold looking back.

"I trust M. de Luynes," said Canaples, as we moved towards her, "that you will remember my invitation, and that whilst you remain at Blois we shall see you here as often as you may be pleased to come; indeed, I trust that you will be a daily visitor."

Before I could utter a reply, "Father," exclaimed Mademoiselle, coming forward, "do you know to whom you are offering the hospitality of Canaples?"

"Why that question, child? To M. de Luynes, M. de Mancini's friend."

"And the would-be murderer of Eugène," she added fiercely.

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Canaples started.

"Surely such affairs are not for women to meddle with," he cried. "Moreover, M. de Luynes has already given me all details of the affair."

Her eyes grew very wide at that.

"He has told you? Yet you invite him hither?" she exclaimed.

"M. de Luynes has naught wherewith to reproach himself, nor have I. Those details which he has given me I may not impart to you; suffice it, however, that I am satisfied that his conduct could not have been other than it was, whereas that of my son reflects but little credit upon his name."

She stamped her foot; and her eyes, blazing with anger, passed from one to the other of us.

"And you—you believe this man's story?"

"Yvonne!"

"Possibly," I interposed coolly, "Mademoiselle may have received some false account of it that justifies her evident unbelief in what I may have told you."

It is not easy to give a lie unless you can prove it a lie. I made her realise this, and she bit her lip in vexation. "Gad! What a pretty viper I thought her at that moment!

"Let me add, Yvonne," said her father, "that M. de Luynes and I are old comrades in arms." Then turning to me, "My daughter, sir, is but a child, and therefore hasty to pass judgment upon matters beyond her understanding. Forget this foolish outburst, and remember only my assurance of an ever cordial welcome."

"With all my heart," I answered, after a moment's deliberation, during which I had argued that for once I must stifle pride if I would serve Andrea.

"Ough!" was all Mademoiselle's comment as she turned her back upon me. Nevertheless I bowed and flourished my beaver to her retreating figure.

Clearly Mademoiselle entertained for me exactly that degree of fondness which a pious nun may feel for the devil, and if I might draw conclusions from what evidences I had had of the strength of her character and the weakness of her father's, our sojourn at Blois promised to afford me little delectation. In fact, I foresaw many difficulties that might lead to disaster should our Paris friends appear upon the scene, a contingency this that seemed over-imminent.

It was not my wont, howbeit, to brood over the evils that the future might hold, and to this I owe it that I slept soundly that night in my room at the *Lys de France*

It was a pleasant enough chamber on the first floor, overlooking the street, and having an alcove attached to it which served for Michelot.

Next day I visited the Château de Canaples early in the afternoon. The weather was milder, and the glow

"Father," exclaimed Mademoiselle, coming forward, "do you know to whom you are offering the hospitality of Canaples?"

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of the sun heralded at last the near approach of spring, and brightened wondrously a landscape that had yesterday worn so forbidding a look.

This change it must have been that drew the ladies, and Andrea with them, to walk in the park, where I came upon them as I rode up. Their laughter rippled merrily, and they appeared upon the best of terms until they espied me. My advent was like a cloud that foretells a storm, and drove Mesdemoiselles away after they had accorded me a greeting that contained scant graciousness.

All unruffled by this act, from which I gathered that Yvonne the strong had tutored Geneviève the frail concerning me, I consigned my horse to a groom of the Château, and linked arms with Andréa.

"Well, boy," quoth I, "what progress?"

He smiled radiantly.

"My hopes are all surpassed. It exceeds belief that so poor a thing as I should find favour in her eyes—what eyes, Gaston!" He broke off with a sigh of rapture.

"You have certainly lost no time. And so already you know that you find favour, eh! How do you know that?"

"How? Need a man be told such things? There is an inexpressible——"

"My good Andrea, seek not to express it therefore," I interrupted hastily. "Let it suffice that the inexpressible exists and makes you happy. His Eminence will doubtless share your joy. Have you written to him?"

The mirth faded from the lad's face at the words, as the blossom fades 'neath the blighting touch of frost. What he said was so undutiful from a nephew touching his uncle, particularly when that uncle is a prelate, that I refrain from penning it.

We were joined just then by the Chevalier, and together we strolled round to the rose-garden, now, alas! naught but black and naked bushes, and down to the edge of the Loire, yellow and swollen by the recent rains.

"How lovely must be this place in summer!" I mused, looking across the water towards Chambord. "And, Gad," I cried, suddenly changing my meditations, "what an ideal fencing ground is this even turf!"

"The swordsman's instinct," laughed Canaples.

And with that our talk shifted to swords, swordsmen, and swordplay, until I suggested to Andrea that he should resume his practice, whereupon the Chevalier offered to set a room at our disposal.

"Nay, if you will pardon me, Monsieur, 'tis not a room we want," I answered. "A room is well enough at the outset, but it is the common error of fencing-masters to continue their tutoring on a wooden floor. It results from this that when the neophyte handles a real sword and defends his life upon the turf, the ground has a new feeling; its elasticity or even its slipperiness discomposes him and set him at a disadvantage."

He agreed with me, whilst Andrea expressed a wish to try the turf. Foils were brought, and we whiled away the best part of half-an-hour. In the end, the Chevalier, who had watched my play intently, offered to try a bout with me. And so amazed was he with the result, that he had not done talking of it when I left Canaples a few hours later, a homage this that earned me some more than ordinarily unfriendly glances from Yvonne. No doubt, since the accomplishment was mine, it became in her eyes characteristic of a bully and a ruffler.

During the week that followed, I visited the Château with regularity, and with equal regularity did Andrea receive his fencing lessons. The object of his presence at Canaples, however, was being frustrated more and more each day, so far as the Cardinal and the Chevalier were concerned.

He raved to me of Geneviève, the one perfect woman in all the world, and brought into it by a kind Providence for his own particular delectation. In truth, love is like a rabid dog—whom it bites it renders mad; so open grew his wooing, and so ardent that one evening I thought well to take him aside and caution him.

"My dear Andrea," said I, "if you will love Geneviève, you will, and there's an end of it. But if you would not have the Chevalier pack you back to Paris and the anger of my Lord Cardinal, be circumspect, and, at least when M. de Canaples is by, divide your homage equally betwixt the two. 'Twere well if you dissembled even a slight preference for Yvonne; she will not be misled by it, seeing how unmistakable at all other seasons must be your wooing of Geneviève."

He was forced to avow the wisdom of my counsel, and to be guided by it.

Nevertheless I rode back to my hostelry in no pleasant frame of mind. It was more than likely that a short shrift and a length of hemp would be the acknowledgment I should anon receive from Mazarin for my participation in the miscarriage of his desires.

I felt that disaster was on the wing. Call it a premonition, call it what you will. I know but this: that as I rode into the courtyard of the *Lys de France* at dusk, the first man my eyes alighted on was the Marquis César de St. Auban and, in conversation with him, six of the most arrant looking ruffians that ever came out of Paris.

CHAPTER IX.

Of how a Whip Proved a Better Argument than a Tongue.

"I crave Monsieur's pardon, but there is a gentleman below who desires to speak with you immediately."

"How does this gentleman call himself, M. l'Hôte?"

"M. le Marquis de St. Auban," answered the landlord, still standing in the doorway.

It wanted an hour or so to noon on the day following that of St. Auban's arrival at Blois, and I was on the point of setting out for the Château on an errand of warning.

It occurred to me to refuse to see the Marquis; but remembering betimes that from your enemy's speech you may sometimes learn where to look for his next attack, I thought better of it and bade my host admit him.

I strode over to the fire, and stirring the burning logs, I put my back to the blaze and waited.

Steps sounded on the stairs; there was the shuffling of the landlord's slippered feet, and the firm tread of my visitor, accompanied by the jingle of spurs and the clank of his scabbard as it struck the balustrade. Then my door was again opened, and St. Auban, as superbly dressed as ever, was admitted.

We bowed formally, as men bow who are about to cross swords, and whilst I waited for him to speak, I noted that his face was pale and bore the impress of suppressed anger.

"So, M. de Luynes, again we meet."

"By your seeking, M. le Marquis."

"You are not polite."

"You are not opportune."

He smiled dangerously.

"I learn, Monsieur, that you are a daily visitor at the Château de Canaples."

"Well, sir, what of it?"

"This—I have been to Canaples this morning, and knowing that you will learn anon, from that old dotard, what passed between us, I prefer that you shall hear it first from me."

I bowed to conceal a smile.

"Thanks to you, M. de Luynes, I was ordered from the house. I—César de St. Auban—have been ordered from the house of a provincial upstart, thanks to the calumnies which you poured into his ears."

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"Calumnies! Was that the word?"

"I choose the word that suits me best," he answered, and the rage that was in him at the affront he had suffered at the hands of the Chevalier de Canaples was fast rising to the surface. "I warned you at Choisy of what would befall. Your opposition and your alliance with M. de Mancini are futile. You think to have gained a victory by winning over to your side an old fool who will sacrifice his honour to see his daughter a duchess; but I tell you, sir——"

"That you hope to see her a marchioness," I put in calmly. "You see, M. de St. Auban, I have learnt something since I came to Blois."

He grew livid with passion.

"You shall learn more ere you quit it, you meddler! You shall be taught to keep that long nose of yours out of matters that concern you not."

I laughed. "Loud threats!" I answered jeeringly.

"Never fear," he cried, "there is more to follow. To your cost shall you learn it. By Gad, sir, do you think that I am to suffer a Sicilian adventurer and a broken tavern ruffler to interfere with my designs?"

Still I kept my temper.

"So," I said in a bantering tone, "you confess that you have designs. Good! But what says the lady, eh? I am told that she is not outrageously enamoured of you; for all your beauty."

Beside himself with passion, his hand sought his sword. But the gesture was spasmodic.

"Knave!" he snarled.

"Knave to me? Have a care, St. Auban; or I'll find you a shroud for a wedding garment."

"Knave!" he repeated with a snarl. "What price are you paid by that boy?"

"By Heaven, St. Auban! You shall answer for this."

"Answer for it? To you!" And he laughed harshly. "You are mad, my master. When did a St. Auban cross swords with a man of your stamp?"

"M. le Marquis," I said, with a calmness that came of a stupendous effort, "at Choisy you sought my friendship with high-sounding talk of principles that opposed you to the proposed alliance 'twixt the houses of Mancini and Canaples. Since then I have learnt that your motives were purely personal. From my discovery I hold you to be a liar."

"Monsieur!"

"I have not yet done. You refuse to cross swords with me on the pretext that you do not fight men of my stamp. I am no saint, sir, I confess. But my sins cannot wash out my name—the name of a family accounted as good as that of St. Auban, and one from which a constable of France has sprung, whereas yours has never yet bred aught but profligates and debauchees. You are little better than I am, Marquis; indeed, you do many things that I would not do, that I have never done. For instance, whilst refusing to cross blades with me, who am a soldier, and a man of the sword, you seek to pick a fight with a beardless boy who hardly knows the use of a rapier, and who, wittingly at least, has done you no wrong. Now, my master, you may call me profligate, ruffler, gamester, duellist—what you will; but there are two viler things you cannot dub me, and which, methinks, I have proven you to be—liar and craven."

And as I spoke the burning words I stood close up to him and tapped his breast as if to drive the epithets into his very heart.

"Now, master craven," I shouted, "will that make you change your mind?"

Rage he felt indeed, and his distorted countenance was a sight fearful to behold.

"Now, my master," I added, setting my arms akimbo, and laughing brutally in his face, "will you fight?"

For a moment he wavered, and surely methought that I had drawn him. Then, "No," he cried passionately. "I will not do dishonour to my sword." And turning, he made for the door, leaving me baffled.

"Go, sir," I shouted, "but fame shall stalk fast behind you. Liar and craven will I dub you throughout the whole of France."

He stopped 'neath the lintel, and faced me again.

"Fool!" he sneered. "You'll need dispatch to spread my fame so far. By this time to-morrow you'll be arrested. In three days you'll be in the Bastille, and there shall you lie until you rot."

"Loud threats again!" I laughed, hoping by the taunt to learn more.

"Loud, perchance, but not empty. Learn that the Cardinal has knowledge of your association with Mancini, and means to separate you. An officer of the guards is on his way to Blois. He is at Meung by now. He bears a warrant for your arrest, and delivery to the governor of the Bastille. Thereafter none may say what will betide." And with a coarse burst of laughter he left me, banging the door as he passed out.

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For a moment I stood there stricken by his parting words. He had sought to wound me and in this he had succeeded. But at what cost to himself? In his blind rage, the fool had shown me that which he should have zealously concealed, and what to him was but a stinging threat, was to me a timely warning. I saw the necessity for immediate action. Two things must I do—kill St. Auban first, then fly the Cardinal's warrant as best I could. I cast about me for means to carry out the first of these intentions. My eye fell upon my riding-whip lying on a chair close to my hand, and the sight of it brought me the idea I sought. Seizing it I bounded out of the room and down the stairs three steps at a time.

Along the corridor I sped, and into the common-room, which at the moment was tolerably full. As I entered by one door, the Marquis was within three paces of the other, leading to the courtyard.

My whip in the air, I sprang after him; and he, hearing the rush of my onslaught, turned, then uttered a cry of pain, as I brought the lash caressingly about his shoulders.

"Now, master craven," I shouted, "will that change your mind?"

With an almost inarticulate cry he sought to draw there and then; but those about flung themselves upon us, and held us apart—I passive and unresisting, the Marquis bellowing, struggling, and foaming at the mouth.

"To meet you now would be to murder you, Marquis," I said coolly. "Send your friends to me to appoint the time."

"So be it," he cried, his eyes blazing with a hate unspeakable. "At eight to-morrow morning I shall await you on the green behind the castle of Blois."

"At eight o'clock I shall be there," I answered. "And now, gentlemen, if you will unhand me, I will return to my apartments."

They let me go, but with many a growl and angry look, for in their eyes I was no more than a coarse aggressor, while their sympathy was all for St. Auban.

(To be continued.)

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Quite Willing to Leave.

A governor of a prison was inspecting the convicts, and during the inspection he remarked to one of them: "See here, man, you are not doing this right, you know; that sort of thing will never do." The convict calmly laid down his tools and said: "Guv'nor, I'm willing to be turned off and discharged if my work don't suit. I never applied for this job or the situation, and if my work ain't satisfactory, I'm willing to go."

Anxious to Please.

He was a new clerk in a big retail establishment, and was anxious to make a record as a salesman. When he had been in the shop a few days a young lady came in and inquired, "Can you let me look at some safety bicycles?" He turned away to get information about the stock, and, returning, said, with a winsome smile, "I am very sorry, miss, we're out of safety bicycles; but we have some splendid safety matches."

The Natural Thing.

The clouds were gathering threateningly over the hills. There was an ominous silence in the air, and all the evidence pointed to the likelihood of a terrible thunderstorm occurring. She had just refused his offer of marriage; but, now that danger threatened, she showed she valued his protection by the way she nestled up to him. "I'm afraid of the lightning," she murmured. "No wonder," sighed the despairing adorer, "when your heart is made of steel."

Something to Say.

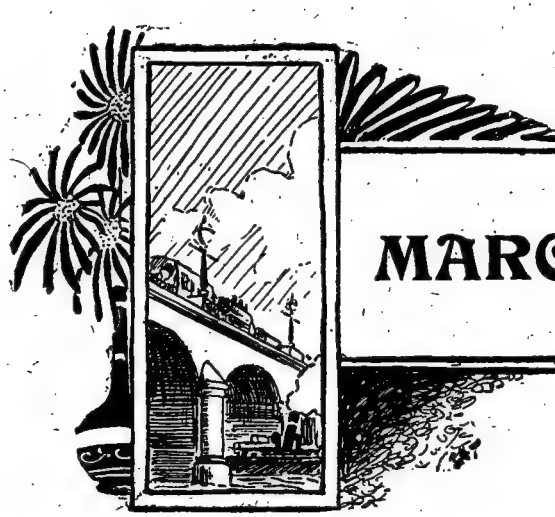
In a Western police court a small boy was about to receive sentence for some petty crime. It was evidently his first offence, and he was not familiar with court usages. When the magistrate asked the usual question before pronouncing sentence, he varied the form a little—carelessly, or perhaps as a slight relief to its monotony. "Well, my boy, have you anything you can say to the Bench?" "Yes, sir," said the frightened boy. "You have!" The case had been very clear against the prisoner. "Speak up, then, and let us hear it." To the amazement of everyone who was present, the little fellow began:

"The boy stood on the burning deck,
Whence all but he had fled!"

So keen was the appreciation of the ludicrous in the listeners that the ingenious youth was allowed to complete the poem without interruption.

Wouldn't be Mean.

"What do you charge by the hour?" quoth a raw Scot, the other day, to a cabby, who was loitering near Charing Cross. "Half-a-crown," said the man. The Scot jumped in and asked to be driven to the Admiralty, where he had business. At the Admiralty the hall porter informed him that the official whom he wished to see was not in; so the visitor from the North desired to be taken back to Charing Cross. As he descended he looked at his watch. The trip had occupied seven minutes. "Ah!" he said, "we were only gone seven minutes, but we'll call it ten. Ten minutes at half-a-crown an hour is fivepence. We'll call it sixpence. I don't wish to be mean." The cabman saw matters in a different light, and a crowd assembled. There were hot words on both sides, and a policeman interfered; but, as the canny one could not be convinced that he had acted in any but the most generous manner, the matter had ultimately to be taken to the police court.



MARCO THE JESTER.

THE clown, brave in his warpaint, and waiting his cue, seemed to pale under the chalk and bismuth—a spasmodic shiver, also, appearing to shake him from head to foot.

Then a shrill whistle.

"Marco!" was shouted by a brazen-throated boy; his voice echoing through the stables and dressing-tents in the neighbourhood of the ring.

"Marco! Marco!" yelled the thousand expectantly delighted people, the roar of welcome, as the object of it all strolled into the arena, making the vast canvas rock again, and tremble to its very peg-cords.

And Marco was evidently himself again, for he never so much as winked an eyelid. This air of assumed stolid indifference but added, however, to the general satisfaction and hilarity, it being the main characteristic of the famous droll's humour.

In private life a silent, reserved man, it was curious to note that his chief professional successes seemed to have been won by something peculiarly akin to the same method.

His quips, his queer outlandish antics were all uttered with a quiet, easy gravity, irresistibly funny.

Time was when he and the bright side of life had been better, the best of friends; and, as thereby hangs a tale, it will be as well to hark back a matter of eight years or more, in order to give it due and proper telling.

* * * *

Joshua Alden's father was an ironmaster in a large way of business in Smethwick, near Birmingham. Come of an old Quaker stock, he seemed to have inherited (superficially, at any rate) a double portion of the spirit—the bigoted side of it—of the "Friends'" founder and patron saint. Keen, and as some declared, suspiciously unscrupulous in his business dealings, he presented to the world a front, stern and uncompromising to a degree.

Having but one child, a son, him he brought up in the strictest accord with his own particular views, so that the lad, and later on the man, came to regard his father in the light of a domestic nuisance and despot, to be ignored or defied as opportunity offered.

Follow his father's calling he would not, and so it was that when old Caleb heard, upon good authority, that his son, whose habits and mode of life had for long been a source of trouble to him, was infatuated with a "belle-of-the-ring;" and that a marriage between them was likely to ensue, he was furious, and spoke hard things.

Joshua, not to be behindhand in the fight for the sceptre, recriminated with many a bitter word, reproaching his father with having, by hypocritical restriction and enforcements, so marred his son's life, as to make of it that which should for ever be a crying witness against him in his parental character.

Seeing that nothing was to be looked for from his father, Joshua resolved to turn the gift of "fooling" (for gift it is), for which, as an amateur he had a certain reputation, to practical account.

Saroni's Circus, the best on the road, and of which Estelle Dubois (professionally known as "L'Estelle") was the queen, the bright particular star, was still in the neighbourhood. Every year, for a season of several months, it occupied a large wooden building on the east side of the town, using the place also as convenient winter quarters.

With Saroni himself Joshua had a more than passing acquaintance—influence even—of a sort. To him, therefore, he applied for employment as a mimic in the ring.

"You!" said the showman, "What for you want to 'clown'? A rich man—you! You fool me—but, yes?"

"Never was more serious in my life," replied the other. "Will you see what I can do? Yes or no!"

"Well, I try you! Come to-morrow morning for rehearsal, then at night we will see! We will see!"

The trial "show," triumphantly successful, resulted in a five years' engagement.

That the presence in the company of Estelle Dubois largely influenced Joshua's determination, there can be no doubt. It could not well be otherwise, seeing how he loved her.

Her "turn," or in ring parlance, her "act," consisted in a combination of bare-backed equilibristic horsemanship, in which, by reason of her neatness of execution, and dainty gracefulness of style, she was unsurpassed, while her personal beauty was as that of a fairy-queen, intensified a hundred times.

There was not a man belonging to the circus but worshipped her, but without avail. Smiles, indeed, had she for all, but these though, as the recipients fondly imagined, kindly meant, were not in any sense "love" smiles, but were part of her professional paraphernalia.

Young Joshua, or as he now styled himself, "Marco,

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the jester," never attempted to soften his father in any way, when once he had severed himself from his home.

Had he been more a man of the world, he would certainly have noticed that Estelle cooled a little in her manner towards him, when it was clear that his chances as heir to a wealthy man were no longer of any value.

But he was of so frankly unsuspicious a nature, that to believe her capable of such a thought concerning him and his prospects never once entered his head.

In the company was a gymnast, a Frenchman, Henri Bleuse, by name. This man Joshua from the very first instinctively disliked. Bleuse, too, soon made it apparent in more ways than one, that the new clown was in no wise a favourite of his. Though there was not the slightest indication, either of word or of manner, that the foreigner entertained for Estelle anything beyond the feeling of admiration common to every man in the troupe, a little incident that occurred a few weeks after Joshua joined, rendered the latter uneasy and anxious.

It was very simple.

One evening, during the performance, and while Marco was standing in the shadow of the curtain waiting his entry, he heard voices the other side of the canvas.

"I am sick to death of it—me!"

Marco started, the speaker was Estelle. Then he listened intently.

"*Bien!* So am I! But patience, patience, and—then—*contente.*"

"Ah! So you say always! But no, it comes—never!"

"I tell you it will come, *petite*! It will come! One little week, and—pouf! the man will speak, and you will laugh!"

"Shall I? I do not think so; but have your way. Hush! *Allez!* they call me!"

Joshua heard no more. In another moment a vision of white tulle flashed past him, and bounded into the ring. At the same instant almost, Bleuse, the gymnast, strolled up to where the droll stood, and tapped him playfully on the shoulder.

"Ah! M'sieu Marco! It is the beautiful one! Eh?"

For the life of him Joshua could not answer the man; and as his own name now echoed loudly, he walked slowly out on to the stage and gravely saluted the master of the ring.

That night, after the "show," Joshua determined to put his hopes to the test, and ask Estelle to be his wife. But, somehow, she contrived to evade giving him the opportunity. Try as he would she eluded him.

Then, the word was passed for the Continental tour. This was always Saroni's rich harvest-time, and preparations went on apace for the transference of everything and everybody to French soil.

They were to open in Compiègne (beloved of the third Bonaparte, the Man of Destiny); the first point of a triumphal progress, of which laughter-loving Vienna should be the end and crown.

On the eve of departure from England, Joshua succeeded in capturing Estelle for a brief moment. He told her that his private means were now exhausted; that there was no prospect of replenishment from his father's purse, and that thenceforward he must depend for support upon his professional earnings.

There was just the slightest possible shade of disappointment visible in her eyes, in the very smallest, almost imperceptible contraction of her pretty brows. But Joshua was in the mood rather to doubt his own senses than the object of his love. Still, he could not quite put the troublous thought away from him that something untoward (what, he knew not), was in the air.

He had loaded her in the shape of presents with the best that money could buy, while the money lasted, but now—well—there was an end to luxury and unlimited *largesse.* Hard, stern times, and the loveless son, the homeless, disinherited wanderer looked hungrily for a sympathetic response from the one into whose keeping he had surrendered his very self—his very soul!

She listened to him in that light-hearted way of hers that always had the power to hypnotise him, and to make of him an only too willing slave.

"When shall it be?—say, Estelle! When shall it be? Have pity on me! for suspense and the misery of hope deferred is torturing me beyond my power to bear!"

A light touch on his arm with the fan she always carried; a light, tinkling laugh, a few merry words in rapid French—words utterly unintelligible to the average Englishman—and she was gone.

Compiègne besieged and conquered, Saroni's combination departed for the sunny south within a week, pitching in the near vicinity of Marseilles.

Beneath the blue skies of southern France Joshua forgot, or seemed to forget, the past in the present, and yielded himself to the glorious influence of warmth, sunshine, and the perfumed air of Europe's wonder-garden.

On the third day of their arrival in the city, and there being, for some reason, no day performance, Joshua started for a ramble through the more ancient parts of the quaint old seaport.

At mid-day he entered a café on the main wharf, ordered, in his best French, a frugal meal, and looked curiously about him.

It was a fairly large place of the third-rate sort, most of the tables being unoccupied.

Near where he had planted himself, however, there was seated a party of four, three men and a woman.

From certain time-honoured indications of dress and demeanour; as, too, from certain becks, nods, smiles, and whispered confidences of the garrulous *garçon*, it was clear that it was a wedding feast, and that the morning's deed was being celebrated in the noontide cup.

The clown was hidden to a great extent from the view of the feasters by a large palm, but could distinctly see the faces of two of the quartette; both being unknown to him.

The other pair, one being the woman, had their backs to Joshua, and he, the place being dark and gloomy, could not form any accurate judgment as to their personal appearance.

Yet there was something strangely familiar to him in the contour and general air of both of them.

With many loud "here's to you's," did the guests at the little banquet pledge the healths of the evident bride and groom, and all this amidst much laughter and volubility.

Then the woman's voice made the listener's ears to tingle, and his heart to beat, for *he knew it.*

"Ah, but yes! He is the silly fool!—the what you call—moth—eh! Innocent? Yes! Not worth that, this good M'sieu Josué Olten! Non!" and the speaker sharply snapped her fingers, breaking out into a silvery laugh of derision.

Yes, he knew her! It was she—Estelle!—and her companion—her new-made husband, was Bleuse, the gymnast! He saw it all now

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The gist of that which he heard was that he had been fooled—miserably fooled! The two, Estelle Dubois, and Henri Bleuse, had, all through the piece, been using him as a profitable orange, which, now that it was dry and nothing but peel, they had thrown down and trodden underfoot.

It seemed that they had agreed to keep secret the fact of their own engagement in order that they might, by means of the woman's wiles, the more surely draw the son of a notoriously rich man, into the net of their scheme of plunder.

Now that their victim had, perforce, disgorged his last penny, the farce, so far as he was concerned, was at an end; the jest, a sorry one, was played out, and the dupe was to be promptly dropped.

How, Joshua could not quite make out; he only knew that it was to be as soon as possible.

Then, he reflected that the end would probably be attained by means of a quarrel to be fixed upon him by the man.

If that were so, why he, Joshua, would be the first in the field.

Always, as we have seen, of a calm, impassive nature (save and except with regard to his love), he rose leisurely from his seat behind the palm, and walked across to where sat the merrymakers, all unconscious of his presence in their midst.

Taking up a full glass of wine from off the table, that stood in front of Bleuse, the clown dashed it deliberately in the gymnast's face.

Noise there was, and clamour, aided by a woman's shrieks, enough to waken the dead.

The *garcon*, apprehending trouble, closed the outer door, and besought the parties to depart peacefully, and arrange their quarrel elsewhere.

This had the effect of bringing matters to a conclusion.

In France it is yet possible, as everybody knows, to settle "affairs of honour" with sword or pistol, without much risk of incurring punishment. A challenge, therefore, on the part of Bleuse, was but a natural consequence, the Frenchman having, as the insulted, the option of choice of weapons, chose the sword.

Joshua, in the old days, had been reputed a good swordsman, beyond the average, he having gained expertness with foil and basket-hilt under the eye of a renowned master of fence.

They met in a quiet spot, just outside the city, and there, in the presence of two of their comrades, Joshua ran his antagonist through the body at the third pass.

It was but the work of a couple of minutes, hardly that.

Within the hour the survivor was safe on board a steamer, and bound for the Thames.

It took all his ready money, but then it meant freedom and perhaps even more than that.

* * * * *

It is some years now since it all happened, but although Marco, the droll, is at the summit of his profession, and rides upon the topmost crest of popular favour, he is a man out of whom the heart has been taken, for he lives as one quite indifferent to the future, in that it can never efface the past.

* * * * *

A short while since the one missing thread in the miserably tangled skein was supplied him unexpectedly.

Said his informant: "Your father, convinced that you were in every way outside the pale of Quaker sanctity (as he conceived it), contracted a violent and unnatural animus towards you. This feeling led him to secretly bribe the woman to lure you on to your own undoing, and in order that he might the more feasibly disinherit you. That, when the truth should out, your heart might be unmercifully wrung, he cared not; rather indeed did he glory in your surely coming misery."

"And this man was my father!" said Joshua. "God forgive him!"

* * * * *

He never again saw Estelle Bleuse, *nee* Dubois, although a whisper went the round of the profession that she had been seen, under another name, in Buenos Ayres, a queen as ever, the world at her feet. R. E.

THE BROKEN CHAIR.

GIACOMO went rapidly up the stairs to the fifth floor, and when he had reached the last landing, on which two doors opened, one at the right, and the other at the left he paused for a moment, drew a key from his pocket, and for a long time regarded the left-hand door, heaved a deep sigh, and then opened the door on the right.

As he stepped over the threshold he turned his h ad quickly and again gazed longingly at the other door, gave a second sigh, and finally stepped inside. On entering his little room, he removed his overcoat, took a chair, placed it beside the wall, seated himself thereon astride, lighted a cigarette and remained thus, watching the clouds of smoke that ascended to the ceiling, every few minutes placing his ear against the wall.

Suddenly, his face, hitherto clouded, assumed an expression of joy. Some one was moving about in the other room.

"She has come home," murmured the young man, and, in fact, a sound of chairs and dishes could now be heard.

"She is preparing supper," again murmured Giacomo, and, leaning his head against the wall, he tried to catch every movement of his neighbour, for, though he could not see her, he was happy in feeling that she was there, and in thus being able to live next door to her.

Poor Giacomo! He feared that he should never again behold her, and this was indeed a great grief to him. At one time he had been accustomed to see her often, for he used to arrange to meet her on the stairs, and there he was wont to await her coming for hours, and on seeing her approach at a distance of hastily ascending a few steps in order to give her time to arrive, when he would go slowly down stairs, feigning to meet her by chance.

Her name was Carlotta. She supported herself by doing embroidery, going out early every morning and returning to her home in the evening.

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She had come to live in this house the preceding year. At first he had only thought of her as a pretty girl, and no more. Then, by degrees, living there thus beside her, he had ended by always thinking of her and by loving her with his whole heart. If she had only been willing to say a word or two to him, or if he had only had the courage to speak, his declaration would have been brief, but conclusive—thus, for instance:

"Signorina, I love you. Will you be my wife?"

But then, alas, in order to offer his hand to the girl it was necessary that the hand should contain something, and Giacomo, unfortunately, had nothing. He was a painter whose canvases found no purchasers, so that the poor boy had been compelled to sell his furniture in order to pay his rent. Nothing now remained save his bed and this wretched, shabby old cane chair, that was only held together by a miracle and on which he was now seated smoking, and lending an ear to the slightest sound that proceeded from the other side of the wall.

Sometimes when seated as usual, astride his chair, he would close his eyes and give free rein to his imagination.

"Who knows of what she may now be thinking?" he would ask himself. "Who knows but that she may even suspect that I am here beside her? Ah, if she only knew how I loved her!" And the temptation would then seize him to make some disturbance in order to attract the girl's attention, such as the discharge of a weapon like some make-believe assassin, who fires a revolver loaded with powder at a passing prince simply that people may talk about him. But the fear of displeasing her restrained him, and he preferred that she should never know that he loved her rather than to be sure that she would never care for him.

Then he fell to building castles in the air.

"It is impossible," thought he, "that she should never think of me at all. She knows that there is such a person as myself; that I live directly adjoining her. When she comes home she can see that there is a light in my room through the door that I leave ajar. Like all women she must have some curiosity and at times must surely ask herself what I am doing, and why I never go out. Perhaps she has already noticed me, notwithstanding my awkwardness, possibly precisely on that account. She may even have divined that I love her. She may expect me to declare myself, and, seeing that I dare not do so, perhaps she will make the first advances. But how can I manage that she shall not delay doing so?"

And Giacomo, still astride his chair, continued his reflections. Suppose he were to write her a letter and push it under the door? He had often thought of doing so. But, then, would the girl have read it? And, even admitting that she had, would not the very first words have wounded her? Should he try and get her to speak of some one? But of whom, then? They had no friend in common. No, no. All these means were decidedly objectionable or impossible. There was nothing to be done but to wait. But, oh, how long would he have to do so?

Meanwhile it was growing late, and Carlotta, in her little room, was making the needle fly rapidly. She had decided to finish the piece of work begun that night, and in order not to fall asleep she was singing.

Giacomo naturally sat up likewise, still in the same position, listening, and mechanically keeping time with his body to the measure of the melody. When the tune was a slow one, all went well, but when it grew quicker his motions became dangerous, for the poor trembling chair was constrained to execute gymnastics far beyond its strength.

After awhile the girl began to grow weary, and the grand arias which she had been singing from the first to the last notes were followed by fragments of songs interrupted now and again, while the tones of her voice grew lower and sweeter, and to cavatinas succeeded "romances" and "reveries."

Giacomo, still seated upon his chair, was not getting drowsy, but continued to stay there, listening to the songs as in a sort of dream, mechanically keeping time by the swaying of his body to the measure of the music.

Carlotta also was falling asleep, but then decided not to go to bed till her work was quite finished, and so made a supreme effort to shake off the drowsiness that was overpowering her, and in order to do so, suddenly began lustily to sing a waltz. Giacomo was now dreaming. Of course he was dreaming of waltzing, and so moved himself about, keeping time to the music, but to this final proof of its strength the chair refused to respond and, with a fearful screeching sound, gave way, dragging down in its fall the unfortunate cavalier.

This caused such a terrific crash that Carlotta, overcome with fright, uttered a loud cry, but Giacomo was silent, for the poor fellow in falling had struck his head against the bed, and now lay stretched upon the floor in a deep swoon.

When he finally regained consciousness, he found himself lying on his bed with his head bandaged, and there beside him, watching over him while embroidering, and seated upon a chair that was neither old nor shabby he beheld a lovely young girl, and whom should it be but Carlotta!

"How is this?" he exclaimed. "You here, signorina?"

"Yes, signor. Last night after the commotion caused by your fall, not hearing any further sound, I feared that some misfortune had befallen you, and so came here and found you in a faint. Now, however, you are much better, and in a few days you will be quite yourself again. But tell me, how in the world did you ever happen to fall off your chair in so strange a manner?"

Giacomo did not reply, and blushed deeply. But women are quick to divine the sentiments that they inspire, and Carlotta was not long in reading the young man's heart.

And now Giacomo and Carlotta are husband and wife, and as happy as it is possible to be in this world. Carlotta is no longer compelled to embroider. The sale of some of her husband's pictures, for he is now beginning to be known, is sufficient to provide for them both. They are living in a simple but pretty apartment, tastefully furnished, and are held in high esteem by all who know them.

One thing, however, causes their friends to wonder. In the place of honour, in the centre of their tiny drawing room, there stands a great ugly cane chair which is in so rickety a condition that in order to maintain it in an upright position Carlotta has been compelled to bind it together with cords.

A. TALIAN.

KIND PARTY: "Why are you crying like that, my little boy?" Little Boy: "'Cause it's the only way I know how."

"PRISONER, you are charged with being drunk and disorderly. Are you guilty, or not guilty?" "That's what you're paid to find out; I ain't going to help yer."

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How Jones Broke Whales to Harness.

"It is strange," said Jones reflectively, as he puffed vigorously at his cigar, "that Jackson Peters never tells us of any more of his ideas for inventions. The last thing was his ingenious notion of putting hinges on the trunks of fruit trees, so that in case of high wind they could be turned down. You never perfected that plan, did you, Jackson?" And Jones turned towards the young man with great apparent interest.

"The thing could be done," answered Peters, as if Jones had cast doubts on its practicability. "And it would be a great boon to fruit-growers in draughty parts of the country. Lately I've been wondering that more progress is not made by inventors in the line of submarine war-boats."

"Possibly you could get some marine hints from an account of my experience with the Leviathan Towing and Transportation Line, which I worked in the late eighties," admitted Jones. "You remember the line, Robinson?"

Robinson answered "Yes," without a blush.

"One night after I went to bed," continued Jones, "it occurred to me that, though hundreds of land animals are of use to man while living, not one of the sea animals has ever been put to any practical use till dead. It seemed probable that the most useful purpose to which living land animals were put by man was as draught animals, of which we may take the horse and the ox as examples. Why were not the animals of the sea used for draught purposes? I became so excited that I lay awake all night thinking about it. The result was the Leviathan Towing and Transportation Line.

"During all my life to think has been to act, therefore you need not be surprised to know that in a month I had left Liverpool on a chartered whaling steamer, looking for whales. I had decided that the whale was the animal most suited to my purpose. Off the coast of Labrador we sighted a large school of whales. Fortunately it was a graded school, so to say, consisting of true whales, Greenland whales, humpbacked whales, fin-backed whales, spermaceti whales, and so forth.

"We had considerable trouble in driving them at first, but I rigged up a fog-horn with a reed, so it would say 'shoo,' and they soon learnt what it meant, and we worked them along down the coast by easy stages. A good many of the more skittish ran back, and I thought at one time that I might have to send a tug ahead with a herring on the end of a stick to coax them; but we finally got them down to Gardiner's Bay, Long Island, and grounded them in the shallow water.

"Of course it has always been self-evident that the whale would make a splendid driving animal if he could be controlled. The most important and hardest thing was clearly to keep him from diving. A careful study showed me that the whale could not dive without first putting his head down; therefore, all that was needed was a bearing rein sufficiently strong to restrain him in that respect.

"I selected a fine whale about seventy-five feet long, which I had noticed was a good traveller, and proceeded to harness him. I put a bit about four inches in diameter in his mouth, with ten-foot check rings on each side. From this bit I ran a hawser along his back, and round his tail, where the flukes are joined to the body. I then put on a large collar, attached a mud barge by four-inch wire cables, and turned him towards deep water for a trial spin.

"Naturally, of course, that whale did not readily take to harness. He reared up, rolled over, charged ahead, struck out fiercely with his flukes, blew a stream of water like an artesian well, and otherwise misbehaved himself. His efforts to dive were something startling, but the bearing-rein held, and he finally gave it up.

"I had wire-cable reins connected with the wheel in the pilot-house, and stood there and guided him, occasionally touching him up with a bamboo fishing-rod. In two hours I could manage him fairly well, and in a week he was fully broken, though he always remained hard-mouthed, and was never what you might call a lady's whale.

"I then went on and broke the others of the school for harness. I found the Greenlands made the best draught animals, and I used them in towing lighters, canal boats, barges, and so forth, either driving them single, or two abreast. The fin-backs I soon discovered were the best driving beasts, being light, active and stylish.

"I took a young and quick-stroke fin-back for my own private use, and used him on my yacht. He was a free goer, and a little inclined to fight shy at lighthouses and promontories, but gentle as a kitten. He could throw spray in the face of any other whale along the coast. He was better on a smooth track, but did not make a bad showing outside, where the track was heavy. He was always rather nervous about being harnessed, and it usually took two men to get him into the shafts.

"I gave up the business on account of the continued opposition of the steamboat people. They made various ridiculous charges, and got the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals excited. The absurd cry was set up that my bearing reins were cruel, and that I was docking the flukes of my driving animals. They also got a law enacted requiring me to stop every fifty miles and feed my whales out of a nose-bag made from a balloon—something utterly uncalled for.

"The charge of fast driving was likewise made against me, and a law was passed prohibiting a speed of above forty-five miles an hour. Finally I gave the whole scheme up and turned my whales loose. I am essentially a man of peace, esteeming quietude above all things. Strife is as distasteful to me as an untruth.

"The whales lapsed into barbarism, but did not utterly forget their cunning. Two years later, when the barque *Curlew* tried to take my fin-back off the coast of Greenland, he dodged the harpoon, took it in his mouth like a tooth-pick, and punched the boats so full of holes with it that they looked like nutmeg-graters." O. P. W.

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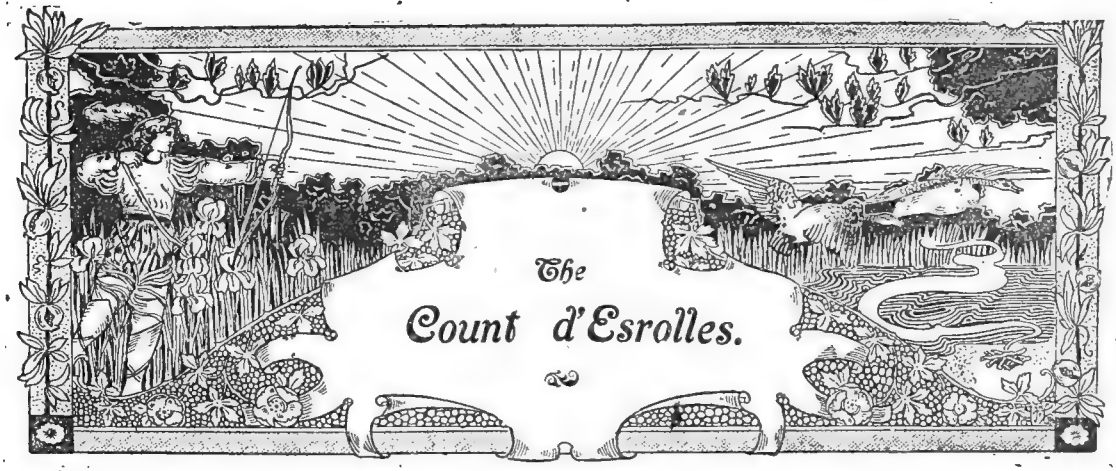

SIR HUGH ELVILLE was not in the best of tempers as he walked aimlessly through the avenue which led to the public road.

Every now and again he would stop and vent his spleen by cutting off the head of some unoffending flower; while the dog which he was leading by a chain would come in for a share of his master's wrath. Reaching the lodge gates the baronet turned at right angles, and continued his walk beside the hedge which formed the boundary of the park.

The anger of the old nobleman seemed to increase with each successive step.

"The estate is going to the dogs, and there is nothing but bankruptcy staring me in the face. I have had to curtail my establishment, and before long I shall have to give up the pack. These are small matters, but they are the forerunners of complete and irretrievable ruin."

Muttering in this manner, Sir Hugh emphasised his remarks by lashing right and left with his cane.

Reaching a quiet spot he again commenced his maledictions:

"Thanks to those rascals—Felwin and Bardale—I am reduced to this. It was no error in judgment on their part when they advised me to sell out my Government stocks and purchase mining shares with the proceeds. The transaction has involved me in losses such as I shall never retrieve. This comes of reposing absolute confidence in stockbrokers, who have had but their own nefarious ends in view from the beginning——"

The remainder of the sentence was left unfinished, for, proceeding up the lane behind the hedge, was his daughter Gwendoline, and by her side walked Bernadin Vallertin, the sight of whom seemed to drive the baronet into renewed frenzy.

Unseen, but seeing, the latter peered through the hedge, and, for the moment, he appeared to lose control of himself. His first impulse was to dash forward and at once put a stop to the interview; but, as there was no means of egress, he contented himself with watching the pair until they disappeared in the distance, and then he recommenced his tirade against his misfortunes.

"And that it should have come to this! My only child to take up with a common adventurer—a Frenchman, whose origin is such that he seeks to hide it from us, and that, too, after an acquaintance of a year's duration.

"I have warned Gwendoline; but all to no purpose apparently. Sterner methods, therefore, are called for. The presuming foreigner must be taught once and for all that his advances are impertinent, and that they are not in accordance with the traditions of the House of Elville!"

The baronet turned proudly upon his heel, and made his way back slowly in the direction of the mansion.

"And you find the company of Bernadin Vallertin more congenial than that of your father's more intimate friends?"

The question was put by Elville to his daughter on the morning after he had been a witness to her meeting with the Frenchman.

Gwendoline tried in vain to suppress the blush that rose to her cheeks as she replied:

"I cannot quite understand you, father; I am at a loss to know what it is that prompts you to make such an inquiry."

"Is it necessary for me to explain myself? Surely, my child, you would not go so far as to deny that you spent a considerable portion of your time yesterday in a ramble with the man to whom I am alluding."

The tell-tale crimson which rose to the girl's face told its own story. To deceive her father never entered into her mind. She had a predilection for the handsome foreigner, it was true, but, knowing her father's hasty disposition, she hesitated to acquaint him with the fact that the meeting with Vallertin had been prearranged.

Following up his advantage, the old baronet continued:

"Has it come to this—for the only living representative of the House of Elville to be brought down to the level of an unknown foreigner? Are not the losses which I have sustained through the knavery of my brokers sufficient of themselves, or must you—my only child, add still further to my humiliation by encouraging one of the common people?"

"But, father," pleaded the girl, with tears in her eyes "surely you are prejudiced—unreasonably prejudiced against Bernadin!"

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"Bernadin! You must indeed have made progress in this familiarity if you can speak of that upstart by his Christian name? Really, Gwendoline, I shall soon begin to think that you are attempting to test the limits of my patience. Have you not the *entrée* into the highest society in the county? Have I not given you every opportunity that lies in my power that you may associate with your equals in birth and position? Must I accuse you of ingratitude as well as bad taste? Who is this Frenchman, I should like to know, who presumes to associate with his betters? A chance acquaintance that we made at Aix les Bains—nothing else!"

"And an acquaintance, father, whom you favoured. You lavished every praise upon him when we met at the Hotel Angleterre, and you remarked at the time how highly you esteemed him. He was your constant companion for weeks, and you must surely forget that you gave him an open invitation to Hawleigh Towers in the event of his ever paying a visit to England. I must confess that I cannot understand this sudden change in your opinions, and I think you must have some hidden reason for taking such a dislike to the man whom you were once pleased to regard as a desirable friend."

"Then I am to be called to account by my own daughter!" exclaimed Erville, with warmth. "I do not deny that the acquaintanceship of Bernadin Vallertin was congenial—the temporary acquaintance, I should say. He is a man of considerable fortune, and as such, he proved of great service to me. I have no doubt that I should have been exposed to consequences which, at the time, I trembled to think of, had it not been for his intervention. I was losing heavily at the tables, but a timely loan from him saved me. That loan was repaid in due course, and I never dreamt that he would one day take up his residence in the neighbourhood of Hawleigh Towers as he has now done. As a travelling acquaintance I appreciated his company, but, at home, I consider that it is undesirable, and any advances on his part I regard in the light of an unqualified impertinence."

The last utterance of the Baronet was accompanied by an impatient stamp of the foot, and Gwendoline saw that further argument was useless.

After the above recorded interview was over, Sir Hugh Elville retired to his study.

For the space of a full half-hour he sat meditating in front of the fire. Several letters were lying upon the table, the sight of which caused him no little uneasiness. Only too well did he divine their contents. Summoning up courage he at last ventured to open them. He had not been mistaken in his surmises as to the tenor of the batch of correspondence which was addressed to him. Demands for a speedy settlement of long-standing debts, coupled with threats of litigation in the event of non-payment by certain specified dates, stared him in the face.

He groaned aloud as he turned over the heap. The unfortunate speculations he had been advised to make had left him without ready money. The deeds of his estates were in the hands of his bankers as cover against the heavy overdraft which they had granted him.

He was at his wits' end to know how to meet his liabilities. He recalled the meeting of Gwendoline and the Frenchman, and then he muttered to himself—"I could have put a stop to this degradation if I had had the money. Gwendoline, without doubt, is infatuated with the dashing foreigner, and I would have taken her away for a year's travelling to cure her of her folly. But it is useless now to think of such a course. My absence would be regarded in the light of an attempt to

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evade my creditors. Disgrace stares me in the face; but bankruptcy is preferable to the alliance of an Elville with one of the 'herd!' Vallertin has wealth, of that I am assured, and I know that he would remove my financial difficulties, were I to receive him as a future member of our family. That, alas, would be the price of his favour—but it cannot be dreamt of—I will not entertain the thought for a single moment!"

A haughty expression passed over Elville's features as he added, "To-morrow, Gwendoline shall know that I forbid her to meet the Frenchman, that, henceforth, he is to be a stranger to the Towers. She shall hear my commands the first thing, and then I will proceed to London and interview the family solicitors."

* * * * *

Sir Hugh was as good as his word.

Immediately he rose on the morning after he had come to the decision to terminate the friendship between his daughter and Vallertin, he gave orders for the brougham to be ready to take him to the station, and in the meanwhile he waited for Gwendoline to put in her appearance at the breakfast-table.

This, however, she failed to do at the appointed time, but her maid brought word to say that her young mistress was feeling indisposed, and that she preferred to take her breakfast in her bedroom.

"Indisposed, indeed! A case of love sickness, which will soon be cured. I am not to be frustrated, and Gwendoline will see before long the wisdom of my resolution."

The meal was hurried through, for the first train was due to start in less than an hour.

Having a few minutes to spare, Elville snatched up a sheet of paper, and writing out the decision he had made on the night previous, he directed one of the servants to give it to his daughter without delay.

The brougham drove off, and a few moments later Gwendoline, pale from the effects of a sleepless night, and with her eyes full of tears, descended the staircase and made her way into the study.

She had made up her mind as to the course to pursue. Deeply as she loved Bernadin, her duty to her father stood before every other consideration. She had anticipated that her parent would forbid all further friendship with Bernadin; and, with a heavy heart, she commenced a letter to her lover and explained to him the reason why she was now forbidden all intercourse with him.

The visit to the family solicitors had been productive of no better results than Sir Hugh had expected.

Immediately he returned, he shut himself up in his study and gave way to the gloomiest reflections.

He was a ruined man, and he knew that nothing short of a miracle could save him from ignominy.

He unlocked the drawers of his bureau and took out the letters which he had gone through the night before. Several others of like import had arrived during his visit to London, and, with a trembling hand he sorted them, first in one order, then in another.

He scarcely knew what he was doing. He seemed to be dazed as he meditated upon the inevitable consequences of his rash speculations. Unlocking the door of a cabinet, he took out a decanter of brandy. He had poured out a glassful of the spirit and was on the point of swallowing it when a tapping on the door arrested his attention.

"A visitor to see you, sir!"

"A visitor, at this hour of the day!" exclaimed the baronet, as he snatched up the card which was lying upon the salver. He read the inscription—a name that was quite unfamiliar to him.

"*The Count d'Esrolles!* I know no one of that title—a perfect stranger to me—I have not even a creditor of that name."

Making his way to the reception room, Elville found awaiting him there no other than Bernadin.

"An unexpected visit this, Monsieur Vallertin." Sir Hugh remarked icily.

"Count d'Esrolles, if you please," added the Frenchman with a coolness that took the baronet aback.

"Count d'Esrolles!" ejaculated the latter with amazement. He hardly knew what interpretation to put upon Bernadin's revelation. He thought that it was but a fresh piece of impertinence on the part of Vallertin who, reading the other's countenance, replied:

"Yes. I am Bernadin Vallertin—also Count d'Esrolles. You hesitate, perhaps, in accepting my claim to that title, but I can give you proofs of my identity—here is one."

Bernadin, as he spoke, produced from his pocket a copy of *Le Monde Illustré*, in which he pointed out a page that was devoted to a likeness of a man who bore the name—Le Comte d'Esrolles.

Elville saw at a glance that the portrait was that of Bernadin himself.

"You, doubtless, are able to divine the motives which have led me to seek this interview. In plain words, I ask for the hand of your daughter. I have good reason to believe that Gwendoline is not wholly indifferent to my advances. I will not dwell at length upon the object which has prompted me to come into this neighbourhood, and to pass myself as 'Monsieur Vallertin.' It was from love of your daughter alone that I acted the part of a friend in need when you were in difficulties at Aix. It is from love of her that I have hidden my present whereabouts from my own family, who are averse to my seeking a union with a foreigner. You will pardon me these candid statements, but circumstances demand a freedom of speech, which otherwise I should never have dreamt of adopting. Gwendoline has already acquainted me with the fact that you have forbidden a continuance of our friendship; and now that I have given you an explanation, am I to understand that you still regard my suit as unwelcome?"

Elville quavered as he listened to the straightforward avowal of the man who was addressing him, and he felt keenly the rebuke which was administered to his proud spirit. In a broken voice he replied:

"Forgive me, d'Esrolles, my hastiness. I am utterly ashamed of the unhappy attitude that I have adopted, and I crave your pardon!"

* * * * *

"Gwendoline, darling!" whispered Bernadin in the ear of his lovely bride, "I have a secret which I cannot keep any longer from you. How it has pained me, no tongue can tell—that I should have been guilty of deceiving your father, but it was my only course to win you, and to save him from utter ruin. I am Bernadin Vallertin—plain 'Monsieur,' and nothing else!"

"And your title was but an assumed one, Bernadin?"

"Yes, and no, Gwendoline!" Le Comte d'Esrolles was but my stage name. Ten years ago did I play that part at the Theatre Français, and, with such a degree of success that I was able to retire from the stage one of the richest men in the profession!"

George H. Best.

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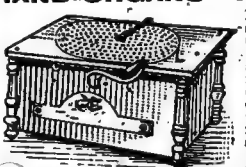
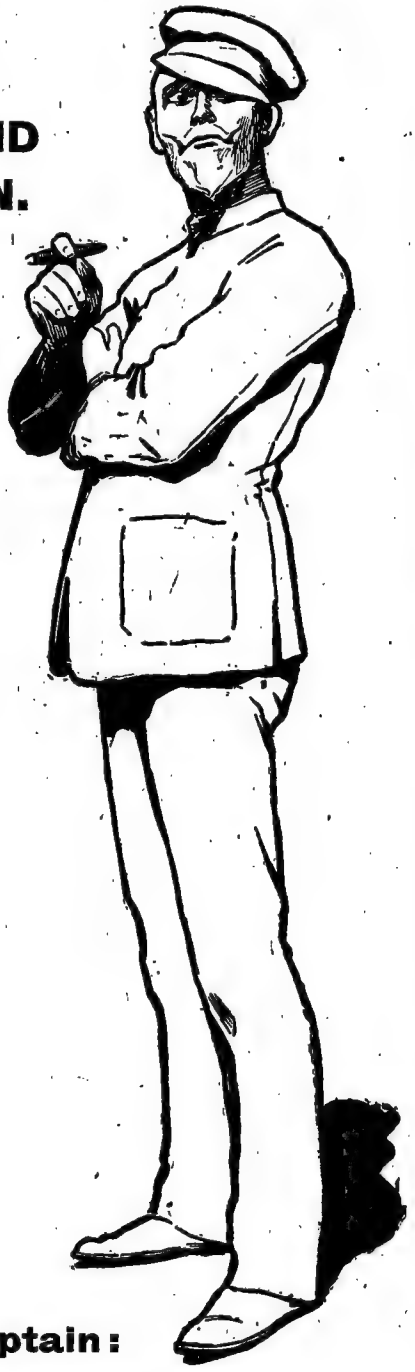
In Rio Janiero, Brazil, S. A., 40,000 patients in that infected district were cured with this same remedy, and wherever used its success has been marvellous.
Remember a letter to America requires 2½d postage. Write your name very plain and be sure to give your full address so there can be no mistake in delivery.

GREAT SALE.

CYCLES HALF PRICE.
Busy men want sound, reliable mounts. Symonds' Cycles are best and cheapest, fully guaranteed, riders delighted with them. Your money back if not as represented. Our cycles are built on honour. Catalogue Free. Address: SYMONDS LONDON STORES, 66 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.

HAND-ORGANS from 20s.

Made in 3 sizes, ebony and gold case. With 3 metal tunes. Full organ tone. Plays songs, hymns, dance music. Sent on receipt of 4s. P.O., if desired. Write for terms to pay 4s. monthly. Price list and tunes. ATLAS CO., 184 High St., Camden Town, London; 63 Seven Sisters Rd.; 14 High Rd., Kilburn.

OUR OLD FRIEND AGAIN.



The Captain:

"Yes, Sir. I'm Captain Kettle, and I'd have you remember I'm a long way off being DEAD yet.

"By James! You get 'Pearson's' and see."

(The famous Captain Kettle Stories recommence in "Pearson's Magazine" for January.

"ALKAN"

Cures in One Minute

BY INHALATION

HEADACHE, FACIAL NEURALGIA, TOOTHACHE, NEURALGIA OF THE EAR.

Attention is particularly requested to the following press opinion, selected from some thousands which commands the attention of and a trial by the sufferer.

The *Family Doctor* writes:
"From investigation of the constituents, we have confidence in saying that the good results are not only rapid, but lasting and free from danger."

This simple and perfectly harmless Remedy has cured instantaneously thousands suffering from the above complaints.

THE EFFECT IS MARVELLOUS.

PRICE, 1st Size, **2/9**; 2nd Size **4/6**, per bottle.

Sent post paid from Depot to any part of the United Kingdom on receipt of price. P.O. should be made payable to "The Alkan Ltd.," and crossed Lloyd's Bank Ltd. (Law Courts Branch), and letters containing stamps registered.

May be obtained from all Chemists and Stores.

If unobtainable locally write to the Sole Proprietors,

THE ALKAN LTD.,

GENERAL DEPOT: **150 STRAND, LONDON, W.C.**

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% **DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS** 2½%
repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.
FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

A BOY'S OVERCOAT

Can be made by any lady who follows carefully the Paper Pattern and instructions

GIVEN AWAY

with every copy of THIS WEEK'S

Home Notes

(No. 416).

The Best and Daintiest of Ladies' Weeklies. You should get a copy at once.

ONE PENNY.

Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. To those readers who submit storyettes which are used, a six shilling novel will be awarded. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 6th. Postcards only, please.

His Parting Shot.

HE: "But couldn't you learn to love me, Ida?" She: "I don't think I could, George." He (reaching for his hat): "It is as I feared. You are too old to learn."

Woman's Gentle Sway.

"HAVE a cigar?" "No, thank you. I've given up smoking entirely." "You have, eh? Allow me to congratulate you. When is the wedding to take place?"

Unfair Advantage.

JESS: "I thought that you hated Jack, and yet you have accepted him." Bess: "I did hate him; but he proposed under an umbrella, and said if I refused he would let the rain drip on my new bonnet."

Hadn't Time.

"So you went to the country on Sunday, Mrs. Hogg, I hear?" "Yes, me and the old man thought we'd have a change." "And what did you see when you got there?" "Nothing. It was a cheap trip, and we had to start off home again."

A Polite Dog.

MOTHER: "Did you thank the gentleman who carried you across the crowded street?" Wee Son: "I tried to, but I didn't know what to say—the words wouldn't come somehow; but I think it's all right, 'cause my dog wagged his tail enough for both of us."

Whose was Best.

ENTHUSIASTIC ARTIST: "Do you know I painted a picture of a lion so naturally that it had to be placed behind bars." Enthusiastic Author: "That's nothing. I wrote a novel so full of burning emotion that it had to be printed on asbestos pages for fear of consuming them."

Piling-up the Punishment.

A CONVICT in a German prison had been extremely refractory. One means and another had been tried, but nothing could break his spirit. One morning the governor said to the keeper, "I say, Huber, the scoundrel is behaving worse than ever. Put him on bread and water." "But he is already doing two fast days." "Then give him a cookery book to read."

What Raised the Circulation.

"WHAT'S this I hear?" asked the business manager of the *Tooting Tootler*, as he entered the publisher's room. "You don't mean to tell me that all of last week's papers are sold?" "Not a copy left," responded the clerk. "And wasn't there an extra edition printed?" "Yes, sir, two of them; but they are all sold out, and the people are asking for more." "What's causing the wonderful sale?" "The society editor inserted a line in last week's paper saying that Miss Smith is the most beautiful young lady in town. He didn't say which Miss Smith, and that's the reason of it."

How They Would Decide.

WEALTHY AMATEUR: "Since you spoke to Jones and myself about this picture, Cadmium, we have arranged that one of us shall have it." Cadmium (brightening): "I am glad of that, very glad; glad on your account, too. Which of you has it?" Wealthy Amateur: "Well, we are going to toss up for it, and the one that loses takes the picture."

A Redeeming Feature.

A.: "My dwelling is bounded on the north by gas works, on the south by some indiarubber works, on the west by a vinegar manufactory, and on the east by a glue-boiling establishment." B.: "A nice neighbourhood, I must say." A.: "Quite so; but it has one advantage. I can always tell which way the wind blows without looking at the weathercock."

Knew What Would Happen.

QUICKPEN (a bookkeeper): "Hello, Thumper, where to?" Thumper (a typewriter): "I'm going to the country for a month's holiday. I've just been discharged by Closefist to make room for a young woman at a smaller salary. I'll have my old place back in about a month." Quickpen: "Think so?" Thumper: "Oh, yes. She'll marry him by that time, and after that she'll make him employ a man."

Payment According to Name Wanted.

"WHAT'S the matter, William?" said the wealthy householder. "Anything gone wrong?" "Not exactly gone wrong, sir, but I want a new understanding." "What about?" "My pay, sir." "Why, you get very good wages for a cook." "Yes, sir; they does very well for a cook, sir. But I overheard you when you were talking to your friends, sir. You called me your *chef*." "Well, you ought to be complimented." "Yes, sir, I'm complimented; but business is business. I can't be a *chef* for less than £800. Wages is all right for a cook, but a *chef* has to have a salary."

The Professional Habit.

HERE is a little tonsorial joke which, whether true or untrue, amusingly illustrates the force of habit. A hairdresser was summoned to a private house the other day simply to shave a pet poodle. The young lady of the house, hearing a sound of a voice in the room in which the operation was being performed, put her ear delicately to the keyhole, and this is what she heard: "Nice day, sir. (Pause.) Razor suit you, sir? (Pause.) Good deal of weather, sir, lately. (Pause.) A little powder, sir? (Pause.) Hair's very thin, sir, on the top; wants a bottle of hair restorer; shampoo, sir? (Growl.) Next!"

PHOTO COMPETITION.

THIS week, two correct claims have been received in connection with the Photo Competition, and £5 notes have been sent to the following:

MISS LOUIE FREEAR, (No. 56),
Strand Theatre,
London, W.C.

MISS MAY DOWLING (No. 58),
Holmbush,
High Park,
Ryde, Isle of Wight.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, January 13th, 1902.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 13.

BAGATELLE.

From each of the following proverbs select a word. Write the words thus selected in a column, when the first letter of each, if the words are correct, will spell the name of a distinguished inventor of the nineteenth century.

1. The more haste the less speed.
2. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
3. The hand of the diligent maketh rich.
4. Too many cooks spoil the broth.
5. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

No. 14.

LETTER PUZZLE.

1. What letter prefixed to not early gives a shallow vessel?
2. What letter changes a word meaning to listen into a fierce fish?
3. What letter will change a useful fluid into a delicate colour?
4. What letter will change large into a specimen?
5. What letter changes farther down into the blossom of a plant?
6. What letter will change a farmer's tool into a covering for the feet?
7. What letter will change the fastening of a door into a timepiece?
8. What letter will change a relative into a frequent resort?

QUERIES.

No. 15.

1. What islands should be taken for lunch?
2. What city will always float?
3. What city is always increasing?
4. What country do you like to have for Christmas?
5. In what island must it always be summer?
6. What country would ruin a new dress?

No. 16.

CHARADE.

I'm a word of five letters. Please tell me my name;
Read me backwards or forwards I spell just the same.
My syllable *first* means insane, and my *second*
A part of a verb has always been reckoned.
My *whole* is a term of respectful address.
You think this is all; but wait; make me less.
Behead and curtail me, and then you will see
That the name of a girl I turn out to be,
Which, read backwards or forwards, is always the same.
Now solve me my riddle and tell me my name.

No. 17.

NUMERICAL ENIGMA.

My whole is a couplet of Pope, containing 68 letters, showing his opinion of omens.

Among the nations who have believed in omens were the 11, 19, 23, 28, 42, 9, and 25, 5, 29, 8, 38, 15; the 16, 56, 26, 44, 39, 10, 31, 34, 27, 54, 65, 49, 36, and the 50, 33, 2, 7, 18, 12, 16.

In 30, 51, 11, 6, 61, 2, 23, 67, an important place has always been given to 24, 14, 19, 20, 41.

A 67, 1, 37, 59 is to the sailor an omen of fair weather.

The croak of the 33, 40, 27, 48, 12, and the 4, 45, 46, 3 of an owl were evil omens.

Many found omens in 32, 25, 68, 26, 47, 55.

To dream of gold was a presage of 43, 58, 64, 56, 23, 63, 55.

It was an ill omen to look at the new moon first through a 17, 2, 31, 39, 57, 35, but a sign of good luck to see it first at your 33, 2, 11, 22, 21, 53, 8, 38, 32.

It was ill-luck to put one's 9, 13, 46, 48, 43 on "awry."

No. 18.

GEOGRAPHICAL PUZZLE.

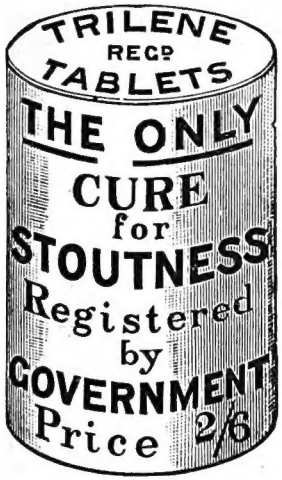
Two girls (*a lake in Africa*) and (*a city in Sicily*), went out to buy some (*island in the Pacific Ocean*) presents. On getting out of the 'bus (*a lake in Africa*) hurt her (*a city in Suffolk*). In a little while she felt better. In one shop (*a city in Sicily*) bought a (*a sea in Persia*) bow and a pair of (*a seaside village in the south-west of France*) gloves. In another shop she bought (*a city in Ireland*) for her smelling-bottle. As yet they had bought no (*an island in the Pacific Ocean*) presents. (*City in Sicily*) bought a (*the first name of a territory in Africa*) pencil for her brother (*a small township in Yorkshire*), and a pretty (*small sea on one side of Australia*) pin for her mother; also a scarf-pin in the shape of (*a cape at the south of South America*) for her father. (*Lake in Africa*) bought her sister (*a town in the north of Egypt*) some preserved (*a river in Africa*) (*a city on the Isle of Man*), a younger sister a doll's (*a country in Asia*) set, her mother an (*a city in Russia*) cape, and her father a (*a city in India*) scarf.

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

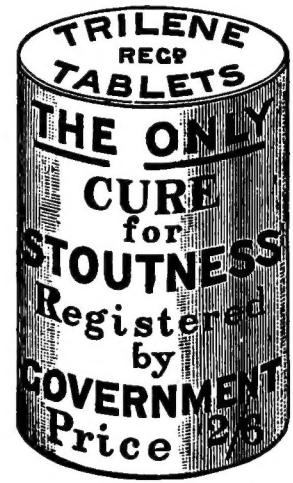
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"67 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

MRS. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me.

"Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Rischolm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 8st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced I is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weigh was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1¼ stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago; they soon reduced me and I have not got stout since Send me a box for my mother."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

IF YOU WISH

Worth a Guinea a Box.

To EAT WELL, SLEEP WELL, and WORK WELL,

TAKE

BEECHAM'S PILLS

YOU WILL EAT WELL

BECAUSE by their specific action on the Digestive Organs **BEECHAM'S PILLS** remove the sensation of fulness and oppression commonly experienced, give the appetite "edge," and restore the Stomach to healthy and natural function.

YOU WILL SLEEP WELL

BECAUSE Beecham's Pills gently calm irritation of the Nervous system, while by their stimulative and cleansing action upon the Liver and Kidneys, Digestion proceeds with normal regularity, so that at night the tranquillised mind and body are prepared for "Nature's sweet restorer"—peaceful slumber. Should one feel restless after an exciting or convivial evening, a dose of **BEECHAM'S PILLS** will quickly induce refreshing sleep.

YOU WILL WORK WELL

BECAUSE Beecham's Pills bring about the proper assimilation of the food taken, give tone to the Stomach, purify the Blood, invigorate the Nervous system, add force to the Muscles, and thus endue the worker—mental or physical—with renewed energy and power.

The World's Medicine.

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